

OA Readings retreat 2022

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THE VISION OF GOD Means of Grace, Hope of Glory

Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 10:56AM
Means of Grace, Hope of Glory

The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum is the title of a 1931 book by K.E. Kirk. I'll summarize it with two quotes from the preface.

Worship is the Christian's first and paramount duty

The highest prerogative of the Christian, in this life as well as hereafter, is the activity of worship; and that nowhere except in this activity will he find the key to his ethical problems.

A side note -- In today's Daily Office, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go to Pharaoh and say to him, "Thus says the Lord: Let my people go, so that they may worship me." (Exodus 8:1)

So then, this is part two of yesterday's "[Apostolic Practice, Social Ethics and Liberal Democracy](#)." Kirk's approach brings together the themes of apostolic practice and social ethics.

D. Stephen Long wrote *Christian Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. It was published by Oxford University Press in 2010. In the middle of the book, he offers a few paragraphs on the various ethical stances found in the church—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, and so on. In "Anglican Ethics" he draws on Kenneth Kirk's work.

Kirk "suggested Christian ethics best proceeds by avoiding both formalism and rigorism. Formalism seeks to bring all of life under kind of a codification, the setting out of codes and laws that proscribe what is not to be done in advance, but actually demands very little; for all it asks is that we avoid violating some formal code. ... Rigorism reacts against this formalism and demands a higher standard."

Kirk goes on to suggest that both are lacking because they miss that the true purpose of life is the vision of God. Kirk uses the whole of Irenaeus' quote,

The glory of God is a living man; and the life of man is the vision of God

Long goes on to explain Kirk's notion that worship is the key to humanity's ethical problems. The way of worship is the alternative to a moralism "that becomes so preoccupied with one's own virtue or morality that it turns into a self-preoccupation; a 'vision of self' supplants the 'vision of God'. Worship re-directs us from self to God."

Kirk has a good bit more to offer. The book presses toward 600 pages. I'll highlight one additional point he makes. The end of all our praying and worship is contemplation or the prayer of union. He's not writing about a set of contemplative practices as we think

of today but a state of being. He seems to be saying much what Martin Thornton means by habitual recollection. A state or stance, the "constant recollection of Christ's presence" or "a continuous, even subconscious, awareness of the divine presence everywhere." It accords with George Herbert's

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in any thing,
To do it as for thee

With all this in mind we might suppose that our first task in contemporary parish development is apostolic practice. And the starting place of that is a parish life of Sunday Eucharist, Daily Office (daily) and reflection. A pattern seen in the parish's common life, week-by-week as well as in the discipline of the parish's apostolic core. All so we might nurture within us the Vision of God.

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READER COMMENTS (1)

For me, this article gets to the essence of Christian life and practice. "Habitual recollection" is a term I've liked for many decades. I tend to tweak the language in a way that fits my language and thought. "Acceptance" and "Presence." Accept the present moment with its circumstances. It is the best God can do given the limitations of creation and the freedom God allows us. (Jean Pierre DeCausade is exquisite with this.) And recall, remember the Presence of the Divine within the present. If I can accept the now and we awake and present to God's presence within the disguise of the now, I can ask, "What is God's will for me in this moment?" That's the question.

The answer can only be three things:

1. To do some duty.
2. To enjoy some enjoyment.
3. (Occasionally in the dark mystery of God) To suffer some present circumstance.

If I am awake and choosing to follow whichever of these three my intuition tells me is God's will, I'm doing as good as I possibly can. That's something like a modest Vision of God. (lots of DeCausade here)

April 8, 2022 | [Lowell Grisham, OA](#)

APOSTOLIC PRACTICE, SOCIAL ETHICS & LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Tuesday, April 5, 2022 at 09:43AM

There are two areas of parish development that have my attention these days. I have ways of addressing the one but am at a loss in regard to the second. The first is apostolic practice. The second is social ethics. My hunch is that if there is a way of effectively addressing the decline of the church's influence in the culture it has to do with these two concerns.

By apostolic practice I mean the habits and systems of our tradition that place us in the pathways of grace. They don't make us saints. They do make us more receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit. And that work is about making us saints. The need is to help more parishioners learn how to do, and be supported in, the daily and weekly routines of prayer and oscillation, i.e., Sunday Eucharist, the daily prayers of the church, and personal devotions that nurture a contemplative and reflective inner life. All of which offer the person, and the parish, renewal in our baptismal identity and purpose. A renewal which is needed to faithfully engage life with friends and family, in workplace and civic life. At the moment four members of the Order of the Ascension are working on projects around apostolic practice. Each somewhat different in its approach. I hope we will learn something more about how to advance this need of the Body of Christ.

The social ethics concern is more difficult to address. The political and cultural noise we work within press approaches that are in large part the "solutions" of an activist class. Now dressed in a bit of faith language to make it go down more easily.

There was a [recent article in Politico](#) on how the polarization of the nation has crept into local politics. I believe the same can be said of how it has shaped the churches. We have been trained to think about our social ethics in the language and issues of the political and cultural debate. This, of course, is connected with the first concern about apostolic practice. So many of us lack that grounding in the methods and habits of spiritual life that we are ill equipped to engage our civic life as proficient Christians. Even those with a disciplined spiritual life rooted in our tradition are challenged to get our head above water and see what is in front of us. The drum beat of correct answers coming from the edges dominates.

Our ability to effectively engage this requires that we refuse to continue operating as though the necessary conversation is between the political right and left. The activists of those orientations keep presenting the church with a series of political choices that cloud our vision and incapacitate our action. The evangelical churches are more challenged from the right and the Episcopal Church from the left. Each find themselves with prescriptions for urgent action that offer a theological justification for some political goal of the activist groups. The Evangelicals are pressed to act on immigration and gender/sexuality issues in a manner that ends up supporting laws that in practice will cause much suffering. While the Episcopalians will find themselves reacting to the wrongness of it all by tilting toward open borders and conversations about the use of pronouns. General Convention will face a series of resolutions impacting Israel's right to exist. In an upside down way, we know that's what they are about because they

assure us they are not about Israel's right to exist. But in fact, collectively, they undermine the rationale of that right to exist. The Evangelicals on the other hand will have little to say about the suffering of the Palestinian people.

How might we regain our balance and grounding?

First, more training and coaching of our parish communities in apostolic practices.

Second, a way of understanding and acting in regard to the polarization and hate in our civic life. A way that is deeply rooted in apostolic practice and sound thinking about social ethics.

Here's my very tentative attempt at that.

I'd begin with two assumptions. One that the Body of Christ has existed within many different forms of civic life and governance. And that is what we will continue to do. The faithfulness of the Church is not dependent on whether the society conforms to some template coming from the Church (which in itself is often a dangerous pathway). Second, that the traditions of liberal democracy are the arrangement closest to the faith's call to justice, peace, and mercy. It ain't perfect but is the best of what we humans have come up with. Maybe you have a different answer to what is the best. A real, not utopian, answer. If so, you might follow that to see where it leaves you.

I read a newsletter called The Liberal Patriot. This is from today's posting in which the writer explores Francis Fukuyama's book.

He quotes Fukuyama -

The most fundamental principle enshrined in liberalism is one of tolerance: you do not have to agree with your fellow citizens about the most important things, but only that each individual should get to decide what they are without interference from you or from the state. Liberalism lowers the temperature of politics by taking questions of final ends off the table: you can believe what you want, but you must do so in private life and not seek to impose your views on your fellow citizens.

The newsletter continues -

Liberalism may be guided by norms of tolerance and reason, but it is enforced by constitutions, laws, regulations, and court rulings that maintain the political and economic rights of individuals to do as they please, provided that they don't interfere with other people's similar rights to self-determination. Liberalism in modern times requires free and fair elections, representative legislatures, a fair and impartial judicial system, neutral bureaucracies, an independent press and media, and a commitment to free speech.

Unfortunately, as Fukuyama correctly argues, classical liberalism is under sustained attack from both the populist right and the identity-based left.

[Here's the whole article.](#)

I have to work hard to not simply fall back upon my years of looking at these matters from the perspective of being a left-wing Democrat. It's not easy. But "new occasions

teach new duties.” You probably have your own similar struggle. I can’t point to a current book on social ethics that provides adequate guidance. Maybe you know one. I looked on my bookshelf and found three that served our society during the last great crisis: *Temple’s Christianity and Social Order*, *Niebuhr’s Moral Man and Immoral Society*, and *Bonhoeffer’s Ethics*. Maybe a reread of each will help. I was struck that in recent years people like President Obama and David Brooks talked about Niebuhr’s work as important in their own thinking.

Here’s what I’ll do.

1. Stay with the apostolic practice and so ground myself in prayer, scripture, and reflection.
2. Read people, who are not on the fringes, trying to understand what’s happening in our politics and culture
3. Reread a few basic books in Christian social ethics.
4. Engage the current situation by pressing political and church leaders to protect and advance “free and fair elections, representative legislatures, a fair and impartial judicial system, neutral bureaucracies, an independent press and media, and a commitment to free speech.”

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Resources

One way to think about apostolic practice is to draw on two ascetical models: [The Threefold Rule of Prayer](#) and the [Renewal-Apostolate Cycle](#). You can find more detail in [Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church](#) and [A Wonderful and Sacred Mystery: A Practical Theology of the Parish Church](#).

PREFACE.

I.

THE history of the Christian doctrine of the *summum bonum*, or of 'man's last end,' as it is not too happily called in technical theology, has never been written in full. The present book, in which movements of vast importance for Christianity are dismissed, as often as not, in a single paragraph, whilst many great names receive no more than cursory mention in the footnotes, makes no claim to supply the deficiency. I have been content simply to review a few outstanding episodes in the history of the doctrine, with the purpose of illustrating the different interpretations, legitimate and illegitimate, to which it has been subjected.

Even this limited aim has had to suffer further restriction. The traditional Christian formula, that the purpose of human life is to see God, opens up a vast field of metaphysical enquiry into the nature of the divine essence, and the modes, conditions, and limits of its communicability to men—how vast, even when restricted to the sphere of Christian theology, may be inferred, for example, from Dr. O'Mahony's admirable recent exposition of S. Thomas' discussions.¹ Questions of this character I have left almost entirely untouched, thinking it better to attempt to fill up a gap in Anglican moral theology, to which I have drawn attention elsewhere,² by concentrating upon the ethical implications of the doctrine.

It is suggested, therefore, in the chapters which follow, that the doctrine 'the end of life is the vision of God' has throughout been interpreted by Christian thought at its best as implying in practice that the highest prerogative of the Christian, in this life as well as hereafter, is the activity of *worship*; and that nowhere except in this activity will he find

¹ J. E. O'Mahony, *The Desire of God in the Philosophy of S. Thomas Aquinas* (Cork University Press, 1929); and cp. *infra*, pp. 106, 305.

² *Conscience and its Problems*, pp. xviii, xix.

to see God

the key to his ethical problems. As a practical corollary it follows that the principal duty of the Christian moralist is to stimulate the spirit of worship in those to whom he addresses himself, rather than to set before them codes of behaviour. Both interpretation and corollary, however, although they spring direct from the genius of the New Testament, have in the course of history been obscured from time to time by accidental causes. Thus the doctrine of the vision of God has sometimes been set forward in such a way as to suggest that the primary purpose of life is to achieve 'religious experience,' and in its narrowest forms has even confined authentic religious experience to moments of ecstatic exhilaration. Again the word 'worship,' at all events, in English use, is normally confined to what is more properly called *public* worship, whilst 'prayer' is often thought of as no more than *petitionary* prayer; thus we tend to overlook the truth that worship (sometimes called also 'contemplation,' the 'prayer of simplicity,' or the 'prayer of union') should be the culminating moment and the invariable concomitant even of the humblest act of private prayer. Further, it must be agreed that, for various reasons, Christianity has often forgotten this primary supernaturalism of its charter, and has allowed itself to be presented as a moral system among other moral systems, with the religious element reduced to little more than an emotional tinting of its ethical scheme. Despite these accidental variations, the unanimity of Christian moralists on the point of cardinal importance is sufficiently striking, and it has been one part of my purpose to exhibit it.

The first lecture, therefore, reviews the antecedents of the doctrine of the vision of God as the end for man in Jewish and pagan thought, and notices the dominance in such circles of the passion for religious 'experience.' Lecture II, though in large part concerned with another problem to which reference will be made in a moment, shows the New Testament writers as a whole insisting upon the primacy of worship, and deprecating, at the same time, the tendency to make 'experience' the test of its reality or worth. Lecture III contrasts with this central Christian doctrine the attempt to substitute moralism for religion by throwing the weight of emphasis upon the promulgation and enforcement of codes of Christian behaviour. Lectures IV and V, though the historical sequence dictated that they too should in the main be occupied with subsidiary questions, illustrate the contention that the great monastic founders and legislators were in the true line of succession from the New Testament, in respect of the emphasis they laid upon contem-

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plative prayer. Lecture VI deals with a few of the wider theological connexions of the conception, particularly in Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux ; Lecture VII with its orderly formulation in theory by the Victorines and S. Thomas, and in the practice of prayer, as arising from loving meditation upon the person of Jesus, by Ignatius of Loyola and S. Francis de Sales. Finally, in Lecture VIII, modern deviations, both Catholic and Protestant, from the traditional doctrine are passed under review, and some, at least, of the criticisms to which the tradition has been and can be subjected are considered.

The changes and chances to which the doctrine of the primacy of the vision of God has been exposed in the progress of the Christian Church are bound up with the history of three institutions—the codification of moral precepts, the exercise of corporate discipline, and the organization of asceticism in the monastic movement. Behind these three tendencies, which I have summarily represented (pp. 3-8) as aspects of the problem of *discipline* in its widest sense, lie three modes of thought—‘formalism,’ ‘institutionalism’ and ‘rigorism’—whose relations with the central ethical *motif* of Christianity seemed to require investigation. This will account for the intrusion into the main theme of the book of episodes from the history of the canon law, in its pre-scientific phase, of penance, and of monasticism, and the moral principles or theories bound up with them. I have not thought it necessary to carry these accounts beyond the stage at which the institutions in question reached a certain degree of stability, and have tried to confine any extended or detailed treatment to points and problems on which information does not appear at present to be readily accessible to English readers. Thus, apart from the special points dealt with in the additional notes, the earlier stages in the history of codification and of penance occupy some part of Lectures III, IV and V ; whilst the beginnings of Christian rigorism are dealt with in Lecture II, its first blossoming into monasticism in Lecture IV, and its incorporation into the full Christian tradition in Lecture V. The final section of Lecture VIII contains some concluding reflections on these three subjects.

II.

To return for a moment to the main theme of the book. It must be obvious that the doctrine that worship is the Christian's first and paramount duty, though it receives lip-service in every branch of the Church, is not one which goes unquestioned at the present day. The criticisms which,

three institutions

consciously and unconsciously, have borne and still bear heavily upon it, I have attempted to consider in the last lecture; but subsidiary discussions are incorporated at other points where, for one reason or another, they appeared specially appropriate. Taken as a whole, therefore, the line of argument which underlies the lectures may be set out as follows:—

The primary question of all formal ethics (if once it is agreed that man is sufficiently endowed with liberty of choice to entitle us to speak of 'ethics' at all) is the definition of the *summum bonum*. Is it best defined in terms of 'happiness' (reward) or in terms of 'virtue' (duty)? Christian moral theology has evolved the answer, in general terms, that whilst happiness (conceived either as present communion with God, or as future beatitude, or in that sense in which virtue is spoken of as 'its own reward') is indeed the reward of virtue, yet the more a man's conduct is determined by his desire to achieve the reward, and by no other desire, the less he deserves the name of Christian (*infra*, pp. 142, 452 f., 458-460, 489 f.).¹ For such a doctrine, which on the one hand rejects emphatically all forms of hedonism, but refuses to lend itself to the extremes of Quietism on the other (pp. 145, 461-463, 554), the words 'disinterestedness' or 'unselfishness,' difficult though they are to define (pp. 552-554), express the ideal of Christian character. It is, further, of the essence of Christian ethics that no form of 'self-centredness' can truly be called disinterested; and under the name of 'self-centredness' is condemned not merely naked egoism of a worldly kind, nor even the quest for beatitude (present or future) in addition, but any kind of preoccupation with one's own soul and its successes and failures in the moral life or the service of its fellow-men (*infra*, pp. 97, 132-134, 198, 447, 554 f.). This last point is one of crucial importance: for it is here that the divergence between Christianity and moralism pure and simple, between 'gospel' and 'law,' has its starting-point (pp. 135, 203, 204). Christianity has known for

¹ For a complete survey of the subject it would of course have been necessary to trace the history of the idea of happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*, *beatitudo*, *felicitas*) through pre-Christian and Christian thought. I have been able to do no more than indicate, in brief notes, one or more phases of that history. That the purpose of the gospel is to offer men happiness, on conditions which have no value of their own except as making access to that beatitude possible, has no doubt at all times been a commonplace of vulgar Christianity. I hope I have frankly admitted this, and have recognized in addition that rightly or wrongly such a point of view can find some justification in the writings of no less a person (for example) than S. Augustine, if not in the gospel record of Christian thought about ethics by compiling an anthology of eudæmonistic sentiments from different centuries; what is important at any period is the manner and degree in which eudæmonism has been tempered by the ideal of disinterestedness.

centuries what psychology has discovered in recent years—that the introvert is of all others the type of character most remote from the ethical ideal.

The first practical question for Christian ethics is, therefore, How is disinterestedness, unselfishness, to be attained? Once grant that moralism, or formalism, cannot bring the soul nearer to it, and there remains only one way—the way of worship. Worship lifts the soul out of its preoccupation with itself and its activities, and centres its aspirations entirely on God (pp. 448-451). In saying this, we must be careful to confuse worship neither with the quest for 'religious experience' (pp. 103, 104, 203, 271, 444, 489-491), nor with the employment of devout thoughts to stimulate moral effort ('ascétisme'—pp. 440, 441), for both these counterfeits of worship lend themselves only too readily to egocentrism. To the criticism that the effort to set oneself to worship must be as egocentric as any other, it can fairly be replied that the spirit of worship, being universally and congenitally diffused among men, requires no antecedent efforts; it is something which comes upon the soul, not which is achieved by it (pp. 464-466).

When once it is recognized that worship is the key to disinterestedness, the effort to conform to codes and standards of behaviour falls into its proper place. It is, on the one hand, an activity which the worshipping soul finds itself compelled to undertake so that its worship may flow more freely; on the other, an invariable outcome of all true worship, in so far as the latter inevitably strives to render its environment more harmonious with the Ideal of which it has caught glimpses. Self-discipline and service, therefore, are to be thought of both as the antecedents and the consequents of worship; and so long as they retain these subordinate but wholly necessary positions, the disinterestedness of worship overflows upon them, and (in M. Bremond's fine phrase) 'disinfects them from egoism' (*infra*, p. 96). It is, I believe, to some such scheme as this that the great paradoxes with which our Lord Himself, and after Him S. Paul, invested the idea of 'law' bear witness; and the following chapters will have failed of their main purpose if they do not suggest that Christian thought at its best has always returned to the same cardinal principle.

III

In preparing the book for publication I have restored to the text passages which considerations of time made it impossible to deliver from the University pulpit: some further passages have been added, together with the appended notes

the intro

Worship comes upon the soul

PREFACE

dealing with points of detail. My obligations to modern writers will be sufficiently evident from the footnotes; if any remain unacknowledged the oversight is unintentional. It has proved impracticable, in the case of patristic and scholastic writers, to append the original text of passages cited in translation; but I have tried to make verification easy by detailed references, wherever necessary, to standard editions.

One inconsistency in quotation must be confessed. Many modern foreign books are available in English translation: in some such cases I have cited direct from the published English version; in other cases have made my own rendering from the original. The choice has been determined by personal convenience alone; the usage in respect of each book is (I believe) consistent; and the footnotes should make it clear—always in the first and often in subsequent citations—whether references are to the pages of the original or to the translation. In the case of M. Bremond's 'Histoire Littéraire du Sentiment Religieux' I have referred readers, for the first volume, to the admirable translation by K. L. Montgomery;¹ for the remaining volumes to the as yet untranslated original.

There are one or two books (notably Batiffol's 'Études d'Histoire et de Théologie Positive,' and Cumont's 'Religions Orientales') of which I have only learnt at a very late stage that the editions I happened to be using were not the most recent. In the case of Cumont I have revised the references, and I hope that they now conform in every case to the paging of his attractive new edition (the fourth): but I have not been able to make any use of the wealth of new material he has collected in the notes. For Batiffol's 'Études' I have retained the references to the fifth edition. In the majority of cases these will serve for the seventh and latest edition as well, the paging remaining in general the same. But two sections of the fifth edition (pp. 195-222, 327-342), which, despite the author's modest disclaimer (seventh edition, p. xxv), are still of importance, are omitted in the seventh, and to these I have found it necessary to refer more than once. The new material in the seventh edition (pp. 194-224, 337-362) deals with S. Augustine's teaching on penance; such allusions to it as seemed necessary I have made in the footnotes to additional note O, where the same problem is considered. The minor variations between the fifth and the seventh editions as a whole I have not been able to notice, except in two cases (Origen, *infra*, p. 226; and Victor of Carthage, *infra*, p. 507).

¹ S.P.C.K., 1928. The translation of the second volume has now appeared, but it came too late for me to use it.

It is impossible to mention by name the very many friends by whose advice, correction, warnings and encouragement I have profited in the preparation of the book. My special thanks are due to the Rev. J. S. Bezzant, Fellow of Exeter College, and to the Rev. Austin Farrer, Chaplain-elect of S. Edmund Hall, who discharged the heavy duty of reading the proofs; and to Miss A. R. Stuart, lecturer in Church History at S. Christopher's College, Blackheath, who undertook the even more irksome task of compiling the indices. I have also to acknowledge the courtesy of Archdeacon Charles and the Delegates of the Oxford University Press, for allowing me to quote passages from their edition of the 'Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha'; and to the same Delegates and the Jowett Trustees, as also to the Editors of the Loeb Classical Library, for similar permissions as regards Jowett's translation of the Dialogues of Plato, and Mr. Gaselee's edition of Apuleius' 'Metamorphoses' respectively. To the compositors and readers of the Aberdeen University Press I owe both an apology for submitting to them a manuscript so full of detailed references, and an acknowledgment of the care and patience with which they have overcome its difficulties.

This leaves me with two final obligations to discharge. The one is due to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., who have allowed me to add so large a book to the three other 'Studies in Moral Theology' which they have published in the last ten years. If these studies should contribute anything of value towards the revival of moral theology in the Church of England, no small part of the credit will be due to the initiative of Messrs. Longmans, who in the difficult years immediately following the war took the risk of publishing a book on a neglected subject by an unknown writer, and allowed (and indeed encouraged) him to persevere in work of the same character.

The other acknowledgment is of a peculiarly personal character. By what was for me the most fortunate of accidents, the syllabus of the original lectures fell into the hands of M. Henri Bremond shortly after they had been delivered. That any member of Cardinal Newman's University and College should receive courteous treatment from the most discerning of his modern interpreters, will cause no surprise; but M. Bremond's kindness went much further than this. Disregarding the hesitations, inconsistencies, and imperfections in which the lectures then abounded and still abound, he professed to discern (what I hope is indeed the truth) that the opinions

PREFACE

I had attempted to put forward had affinities with his own illuminating critiques of the abiding tendencies in religious thought; and with the most generous of gestures opened the way to an interchange of views whose value to myself it would be impossible to over-estimate. Despite the vast claims which the publication of his great 'Histoire' and its subsidiary studies makes upon his time, he has shown himself throughout more than willing to answer questions, give advice, and draw attention to investigations and points of view which would otherwise have escaped my notice. I have availed myself very freely of his kind interest: have adopted no small part of his terminology: and have throughout the lectures incorporated references to his books at points where his clear and penetrating exposition seemed likely to throw light on my own obscurities. The pages which follow challenge no comparison with his majestic and finished treatment of religious thought: but if they serve no other purpose than to make his writings better known in England I shall at least be able to feel that I have repaid some trifling part of the debt which I owe to him.

II. 'WORSHIP' AND 'SERVICE.'

Post-Reformation developments of thought, both in Protestant and in Catholic circles, combined, therefore, to challenge the traditional primacy of the doctrine of the vision of God. By evacuating prayer of all but its 'practical' aspect, by denying (in effect) that communion with God through worship can be an end in itself for human life, they voiced in the most pointed manner a criticism—or, rather, two alternative criticisms—of which many Christians catch an echo in the secrecy of their own reflections. (i) Against that traditional development of thought which, from New Testament or even from pre-Christian times, has taught that the goal of human life is to see God, it is urged, in the first place, that such an ideal is essentially and pre-eminently selfish, in that it proposes a course of life devoted solely to the attainment of personal satisfaction. But (ii) even if it could be shown that the

¹ Bremond, *HLSR.*, viii, pp. 275, 276.

ideal of the vision of God is no more selfish than one of explicit altruism, it might yet be said that on utilitarian grounds alone the latter is the higher of the two. The doctrine of the vision of God makes worship the primary human activity; and as compared with the ideal of service worship has all the appearance of a barren, limited and anti-social aspiration. If, then, we are to estimate the value of that vast concentration of Christian thought upon worship to which the preceding chapters bear witness, we must be prepared to explore these criticisms, each in its turn, and to ask how far they can be met satisfactorily.

(a) *Is the quest for the vision of God a selfish ideal?*

It would be foolish to deny that the desire to see God in pre-Christian religious thought¹ appealed often enough to motives rightly deserving the adjectives 'selfish' or 'interested.' In the main it seems to have been animated by a passion for a personal experience—for the attaining of a particular state of consciousness, or indeed, in some cases, of unconsciousness. The special characteristics of this state, as conceived or experienced by different persons or groups, do not affect the question of principle—whether God was 'seen' in ecstasy, or in dreams, or in a calm untroubled communion with nature, matters nothing. At heart, in all these aspirations, the believer was in pursuit of something *for himself*—regardless, it may almost be said, of the interests of any other, whether God or his neighbour.

Large parts of Christendom, again, in every generation have adopted this same ideal, and can without hesitation be accused of selfishness for that reason. But here the accusation holds at best only within certain limits. The Christian seeker after God was rarely content with solitary enjoyment of the vision. Even the Rabbis, as we have seen, insisted that its attainment is in truth a corporate experience. To S. Paul and S. John it could have no other context than that of the Church—now militant, but in eternity triumphant. Clement's gnostic—a person at first sight wholly self-contained—longs for a city like Plato's 'set up as a pattern in heaven'—an 'ordered multitude' of the blessed; to Augustine the vision of God in the city of God was an ideal from which the one member could no more be subtracted than the other.

Christian art and Christian literature tell the same story. In the last quarter of the eighth century an obscure Asturian recluse, Beatus, abbot of Liébana,² composed a commentary on the 'Apocalypse' which achieved wide popularity, and was circulated in manuscripts adorned by miniatures copied from Oriental sources.

¹ *Supra*, pp. 54, 104, 110.

² This is the same Beatus, and the same Commentary, as transmitted the fragments of Tyconius and what survives of his doctrine of the two cities (*supra*, p. 331). It would be interesting to know whether it was the subject-matter, or the illustrations, of the manuscripts which most of all gave them this double importance for history.

M. Émile Mâle has traced out the epoch-making influence of this forgotten book.¹ The manuscripts travelled into northern Europe by the great pilgrim roads which led to and from St. James of Compostela; one of them found a home at Moissac, a Cluniac priory not far north of Toulouse. There for the first time (as it seems) the beatific vision of Christ in glory, surrounded by the four beasts and the four and twenty elders, was translated from a coloured miniature to the stone tympanum of a Romance church. Thence also the craftsmen of Moissac and their copyists spread the theme far and wide—back southward to Santiago’s Porch of Glory itself; northwards to Chartres, Le Mans, and Cluny, and from Chartres south again to St. Trophime at Arles. Elsewhere the same school of artists varied the picture. Sometimes it becomes an Ascension; sometimes a Last Supper or a Pentecost; sometimes a Day of Judgment—the theme which was to prevail in the thirteenth and following centuries. But in every one of these compositions it is the artist’s joy to introduce more and more figures into his scene—angels, apostles, the Blessed Virgin, saints and martyrs, the risen dead (some of them rapt in contemplation from the moment of leaving the tomb), the nations of the world—as in the vast tympanum of Vézelay—real and fabulous alike,—as though to emphasize in the enduring material of stone this primary Christian conviction, that the vision of God is not for the isolated believer, but for the believer in communion with the whole vast animate universe and all its denizens.

Christian poetry tells the same tale. No account of the vision of God and its influence upon the history of Christian ideals could be complete without some allusion to the ‘Divina Commedia.’ But the reference is specially appropriate at this point. In the final cantos of the ‘Purgatorio’ the animated crowds which hitherto have marked the poet’s journey have gradually been withdrawn, and on the threshold of the ‘Paradiso’ he stands alone with Beatrice in the terrestrial Paradise. As they rise towards the empyrean, heaven grows radiant around them with the spirits of the blest—the myriad splendours,² living and victorious; the ‘jewels dear and fair’³ of the celestial court. The final vision portrays the great Rose of God and His innumerable saints, word-painted as no other poet has ever found it possible to depict them:—

‘ Thus in the form of a white rose revealed itself to me that saintly host, which Christ espoused in His own blood. There with that other host—the angels—which as it soars, contem-

¹ E. Mâle, *L’art religieux du xiii^e siècle en France, pass.*; *L’art religieux du xiii^e siècle*, p. 362; *ib.*, pp. 369-393, later developments. The Ascension is at Toulouse, Cahors, and Angoulême; the Last Supper at St. Bénigne, and St. Gilles; the Pentecost at Vézelay; the Judgment at Beaulieu, St. Denis, and Autun.

² *Paradiso*, v, 104, 105; *ib.*, x, 64-66.

³ *ib.*, x, 71—of the circle of Doctors in the Sun. Similarly cantos xv, xviii—the Cross of warrior-saints; xviii, 70 ff.; xix—the Alphabet and Eagle of just men in Jupiter; xxii—the contemplatives in the seventh heaven.

plates and chants the glory of Him Who fills it with love, and the goodness which made it so great—like as a swarm of bees, which one while settles within the flowers and anon returns to the hive where its work is stored in sweetness—now lighted down upon the great flower with its coronal of many petals; now again soared aloft to the place where its love doth for ever dwell. And all their faces were of living flame, and of gold their wings; and for the rest they were all white beyond the whiteness of snow. . . . This realm of security and joy, peopled by folk alike of old time and of new, centred its looks and its love upon one mark alone. O threefold light, whose bright radiance, shed in a single beam upon their eyes, doth so content them, look hither down upon our storm-tossed lives.'¹

The vision then is to be a corporate one; and this makes the quest for it, in any case, something less than wholly selfish. But this is only half the truth. The greatest saints have always recognized that to make enjoyment, even though it be a communal enjoyment, the goal of life, is to import a motive less than the purest into ethics. The emphatic protests against 'panhedonism' in any one of its different forms, which we have noticed at different stages,² are evidence that Christianity was alive to the danger; and that however much lesser minds succumbed to it, the greatest figures in the history of the Church knew that it represented something in essence at once immoral and un-Christian.

It has recently been suggested³ that the protests grew in vigour and intensity with the passage of the centuries; that Cardinal de Bérulle, for example, the founder of the French Oratorians, realized the danger more fully than S. Augustine. It would require a far wider survey of the available evidence than any we have made before we could either endorse or rebut this suggestion. What, however, is beyond all question is that no century went by without a few prophetic voices to declare the solid truth. S. Paul's great insistence, that the *disposition* appropriate to one who sees God is of greater importance, here on earth, than the vision itself, is never without an echo for long. Divine favours, though they cannot be treasured too highly if they come unmasked, are not to be sought for themselves. When they come, they are to be tested lest they should prove to be sentimental and subjective illusions; when they do not come, and the heart remains dry and the spirit sad, it must not be concluded either that God is displeased, or that the yearning soul has given Him cause for displeasure.

The doctrine that the 'end of man is the vision of God,' as a practical maxim for life, implies that the Christian should set himself first of all to focus his thought upon God in the spirit of worship.

¹ *Paradiso*, xxxi, 1-30.

² *Supra*, pp. 104, 202 f., 271 f., 352, etc.

³ Bremond, *HLSR.*, iii, pp. 23-33, with footnotes—a most illuminating passage. On Bérulle, whose importance in this respect M. Bremond marks by crediting him with a 'Copernican revolution' to theocentrism, *ib.*, pp. 3-279.

It implies this of necessity, and of necessity it implies nothing more—nothing whatever as to the achieving of pleasures, rapture, exaltation in the act of worship. The only achievement man has the right to hope for is that of greater Christian saintliness—greater zeal for service—coming from this direction of the heart and mind to God. It can hardly be denied that in so far as unselfishness is possible in this life at all (to anticipate for a moment another question), this is an unselfish ideal. To look towards God, and from that 'look' to acquire insight both into the follies of one's own heart and the needs of one's neighbours, with power to correct the one no less than to serve the other—this is something very remote from any quest for 'religious experience' for its own sake. Yet this, and nothing else, is what the vision of God has meant in the fully developed thought of historic Christianity.

(b) *Is 'worship' a higher ideal than 'service'?*

The second question prompted by this review of Christian thought has many aspects. Granted that 'worship' is unselfish, it may be said, surely 'service' may be unselfish too? ¹ And further, a comparison of worship and service, viewed in relation to the world's deepest needs, both spiritual and temporal, suggests that service—the unremitting service of God and man—is the more urgently needed of the two. The protagonist of the 'active' as against the 'contemplative' life is often prepared to make very large concessions. He will admit that in some mysterious way God—though He *needs* neither worship nor service—can and does take pleasure in both when they are freely given. He will admit, on occasion, that intercession for others is in itself a genuine form of service, and *where no other service can be rendered them* fulfils the Christian law of love in their regard. He frankly and fully believes (and appeals for support to the most modern developments of psychology) that for many the exercise of worship is a stimulus to better service, so that the man who prays is normally more alert to help his fellows, and to take the initiative against evil in the world, than he who does not. Thus he can admit a 'mixed' life, like that of S. Gregory, in which worship and service—contemplation and activity—are joined in due proportions. By these concessions many Christians of goodwill feel that they have done all that can be demanded of them, or of anyone, to make room for the doctrine of the vision of God, among the multiple calls and responsibilities which their neighbours' welfare lays upon them.

On the other side the advocates of contemplation make overtures of equal importance. They insist, as a matter of sound theology, that the beatific vision implies the seeing of all things in

¹ To put the argument at its highest we must concentrate upon *unself-conscious* service—e.g. the spontaneous benevolence of a naturally altruistic person; for the egocentrism of self-conscious service has been considered previously (*supra*, pp. 132-135). On the equation 'self-centredness = selfishness,' *infra*, p. 554, additional note T.

A man must be blind not to recognize something of himself in this picture; he must be no less callous if he fails to long for the spirit of humility. But humility cannot be acquired by taking thought for oneself; that way, as S. Paul's condemnation of the law has once for all made clear, lie only the alternatives of pride and despair. The way of worship is the only way left open. Even worship is not altogether exempt from the dangers of pride and despair. But in so far as contemplation, or worship, is to be distinguished from service—and the distinction is one which the world has agreed to make—it is surely true to say that contemplation ministers to humility just as service ministers to patronage.¹ The man who 'serves'—who plans, and organizes, and issues instructions, advice or exhortations—is doing so from the vantage ground of independence. He thinks of himself as a free agent, dowered with talents to be employed for the benefit of others. In worship, on the contrary, the worshipper puts himself in an attitude of dependence. In looking towards God, who is All in All, he sees himself to be nothing; in worshipping his Redeemer, he knows himself incapable of redeeming even the least of God's creatures. The most he can hope for is that God will deign to use him for the forwarding of His high designs. Worship tells us much good of God, but little good of ourselves, except that we are the work of God's hands. For that we may praise Him, but it leaves us nothing upon which to pride ourselves.

The contrast must not be pressed too far. There are dilettantes of worship who rise from their knees with a self-complacency rivalling the worst conceits of men of action. On the other hand, there are those who—though they make little if any use of the time-honoured forms of worship—yet serve their fellows with a humility which puts the ordinary Christian to shame. The former need not disturb us. They are at best beginners in the art of worship. It is more than likely that their aim is not to look towards God, but to secure private and personal joys in religion. The latter, again, though they set an example which we may despair ever to follow

¹ M. Bremond puts this far better than I can (*Philosophie de la Prière*, pp. 50-54). As between 'service' ('ascèse') and 'worship,' he says, 'la première se prodigue, la seconde reçoit; l'une se porte de l'avant, s'affirme, l'autre voudrait s'effacer, s'éteindre. L'une et l'autre comptent sur le concours divin . . . mais la première, sûre que ne lui manquera pas ce concours indispensable, que d'ailleurs elle a demandé, se gouverne comme si elle n'avait plus à compter que sur elle-même. . . . Dans la première, Dieu paraît être comme l'instrument de notre énergie. Dans la seconde, toute notre énergie tend à devenir l'instrument de Dieu. La première, de toute la force dont elle dispose, dit "Volo," elle semble dire à Dieu, "Laissez-moi faire"; la seconde lui dit: "Faites" . . . Dans les activités d'ascèse se déploie une énergie toujours consciente, critique, aux aguets, craignant toujours ou de mollir ou de s'appliquer où il ne faut pas; se surveillant, et s'examinant sans relâche, se demandant des comptes à chaque pas; tandis que les activités de prière s'oublient, s'abandonnent les yeux fermés à la grâce qui les porte, à la présence qui se donne, à l'union qui se consomme.' Cp. *ib.*, pp. 64, 65, and the whole passage; and Lallemand, as quoted in *HLSR.*, v, pp. 26-36. Similarly, G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Mediæval England*, pp. 114 ff., on Richard Rolle.

worthily, themselves go far to establish the principle in view. Their unselfish service is in itself proof that—whether by accident or natural gift—they are already in the attitude of worship towards their ideal. The ideal is their All, and they—their needs, their sufferings, their lives—are nothing in comparison with it. They are ready to sacrifice all that they have in its service; and the spirit of worship is betrayed in the very fact that they would be the last to claim that they had sacrificed anything at all, or to accept the title of heroes. They are beyond the criticism of Christian people; we can only recognize in them the very type of Christian service itself, and thank God for their example.

But with these exceptions the principle stands true. The danger of 'service,' as an ideal, is that it fosters the spirit of patronage: the glory of worship is to elicit the grace of humility. Without humility there can be no service worth the name; patronizing service is self-destructive—it may be the greatest of all disservices. Hence to serve his fellows *at all*—to avoid doing them harm greater even than the good he proposed to confer on them—a man must find a place for worship in his life. The truth is not that worship (as the advocate of action allowed us to assert) will help him to serve *better*. The alternative lies not between service of a better and a worse kind; it lies between service and no service at all. If we would attempt to do good with any sure hope that it will prove good and not evil, we must act in the spirit of humility; and worship alone can make us humble. There is no other course.

This is no more than to carry to its conclusion what we have noticed already on more than one occasion, that a system of thought which is primarily moralistic, in so far as it sets before men a rule of conduct by which it is their first duty to measure themselves, is in essence egocentric. It is only one of the many forms which selfishness can take, even though its rule appear superficially altruistic. It is not without surprise that one finds Heiler, in the book to which reference has already been made, endorsing this judgment in respect of that 'prophetic' religion of which Luther is the supreme exponent, without the slightest recognition of its seriousness. The adjectives which he employs to illustrate the superiority of 'evangelic' or 'prophetic' religion over its rival, ring out, one after another, with a sound as ominous as it is triumphant. The 'prophetic' religion, Heiler says, is 'self-assertive' and 'voluntaristic.'¹ It enshrines 'an irresistible will to live, an uncontrollable impulse towards the expression, mastery and exaltation of the sense of living.'² It 'believes in life, affirms life, and throws itself with joy and resolution into the arms of life.'³ 'One of the weightiest aspirations of "prophetic" personalities is the vindication of their personal worth.'⁴ Most emphatic and illuminating is the following

¹ F. Heiler, *Das Gebet*, p. 248; cp. p. 283.

² *Ib.*, p. 255.

³ *Ib.*, p. 257.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 361—'Die Behauptung des eigenen Wertes ist eine der wichtigsten Bitten der prophetischen Persönlichkeiten'; cp. *ib.*, p. 376—'Among the

contrast: 'The exclusive object to which "mystical" prayer is directed is God, the one Reality, the highest value; the object to which "prophetic" prayer is directed is man's own joy and sorrow, his troubles and fears, his plans and confidences.'¹

I hope I have not misrepresented by these extracts one who has few equals in the sphere of historical theology which he has made his own. But it is hard to resist the conclusion that the 'prophetic' prayer commended in this last contrast is frankly pagan and selfish; whilst the adjectives and phrases descriptive of prophetic religion quoted in the lines immediately preceding seem to be more applicable to the ethics of Nietzsche than to those of Luther, and certainly to have little if anything in common with the self-denying, self-forgetful genius of Christianity.

But if Heiler is right, and Protestantism—with its rejection of mystical prayer—is as self-assertive as he suggests, the fact is further evidence of our general contention. Where God ceases to be 'the exclusive object towards which prayer is directed,' life and thought at once become patronizing; it matters little that their patronage expresses itself in the form of what the world calls benevolence. The ultimate purpose which the agent has in view is not the well-being of others, but the 'vindication of his own personal worth.'

means [employed in 'prophetic' prayer] to make God listen, is to appeal to one's own piety and righteousness' ('die Berufung auf die eigene Frömmigkeit und Gerechtigkeit'); so Luther, 'Thou knowest that I have diligently taught Thy word' (*ib.*,—the same phenomenon in primitive prayer, *ib.*, p. 85).

¹ F. Heiler, *Das Gebet*, p. 359.—It is interesting to compare with this the almost identical phrases in which a modern Roman Catholic commends the 'practical' prayer of the Jesuits. Unlike Heiler, he associates Judaism with 'worship' rather than with 'practice'; apart from this difference his 'Jesuit prayer is identical with the 'prophetic.' F. Vincent, *S. François de Sales, directeur d'âmes* (1923), p. 113—A contrast is drawn between 'Jesuit prayer' and the older tradition (which is called 'Benedictine'—p. 117); the latter is treated as being in essence purely un-Christian. Thus 'if God appears to us, as He did to the Jews, in all His disconcerting majesty, we shall be compelled to abase ourselves before Him, and therefore to subordinate all our other religious duties to that of worship. If we conceive of God after the Jewish pattern we shall tend to forget ourselves, to lose sight of ourselves, to perceive no one except the all-powerful King. . . . But if God is regarded as a father, an indulgent teacher, anxious for the advancement of our souls, we shall be led infallibly to fix in ourselves the centre of our preoccupations.' *Ib.*, p. 102—This is the real service which the Jesuits have done to humanity. Till they appeared 'the spirit of worship in the Church, going back behind the gospel to the Mosaic law, and resting upon an awed and frightened idea of the Deity, was dominant.' But the Jesuits, 'with a higher conception of religion,' 'tore Christianity from its age-long habits,' and 'identified it with moral progress.' Their 'dominant and invariable preoccupation has been to honour God first by self-culture, then by the cultivation of the service of others.' *Ib.*, p. 117—'The Benedictine's gaze is fixed primarily upon God; that of the Salesian' (taken as a type of the Jesuit) 'is above all upon himself.' *Ib.*, p. 128—'Religion has [rightly] become identified with self-culture,' etc. It ought to be added that there is much of value in M. Vincent's book, and that its main purpose (though confused in the working out) is simply to denounce ceremonial formalism unaccompanied by moral effort; but it has given M. Bremond an opportunity for lively and not unjustified comment (cp. Bremond, *HLSR.*, vii, pp. 27-39, with notes; *Philosophie de la Prière*, pp. 178-186).

This gives us material for a conclusion. 'Your ideal of service,'—so we may imagine traditional Christianity answering robust commonsense—'necessarily leads up to the ideal of worship as its consummation. Without the latter you cannot achieve the former; and, if worship languishes, service will once more degenerate into mere self-assertion. The two are, at least, co-ordinate parts of the same ideal whole.'

It is not likely that such an apologia would satisfy the heroes of Christian saintliness whose ideals have been considered in preceding chapters. With a faith which the modern world finds it hard to share they started from the conviction that the life of heaven would be more akin to adoration than to labour. 'Ubi non prævenit rem desiderium' is their definition of heaven; and where desire and achievement are simultaneous, there is no longer any place for effort, as we understand it. But there is still, and always, a place for contemplation. Service here on earth is no more than a preparation for the contemplation of heaven, and in heaven contemplation is the only service required of the redeemed. In earthly worship man does not merely secure for service that which alone can make it serviceable; he anticipates the essential and all-engrossing activity of eternal life.

Something after the fashion of the last paragraph would run the full Christian defence of the primacy of worship. But for the present it is enough, perhaps, to have pressed a less ambitious argument, urging that without the spirit of worship no service can be worth the name. Disinterested service is the only service that is serviceable; and disinterestedness comes by the life of worship alone. But at once a further criticism presents itself. Christianity has taken the way of the Cross as its example; it has made disinterestedness the test of all ideals. By that test worship is vindicated as being indeed an integral part of the full Christian life, and the vision of God may still be proclaimed as the goal. But is the test a fair one—is it, indeed, a test that has any meaning at all? The criticism strikes at the very heart of the gospel of self-sacrifice: but it cannot on that account be disallowed. It claims that all a man's actions are dominated by self-interest, and that in consequence the whole quest for disinterestedness, for the 'good will,' for 'Pure Love,' is a meaningless chimera. Outside organized Christianity the controversy has centred round the ethical idealism of Immanuel Kant; within the Church it provided a dramatic setting for the classical encounter between Bossuet and Fénelon.

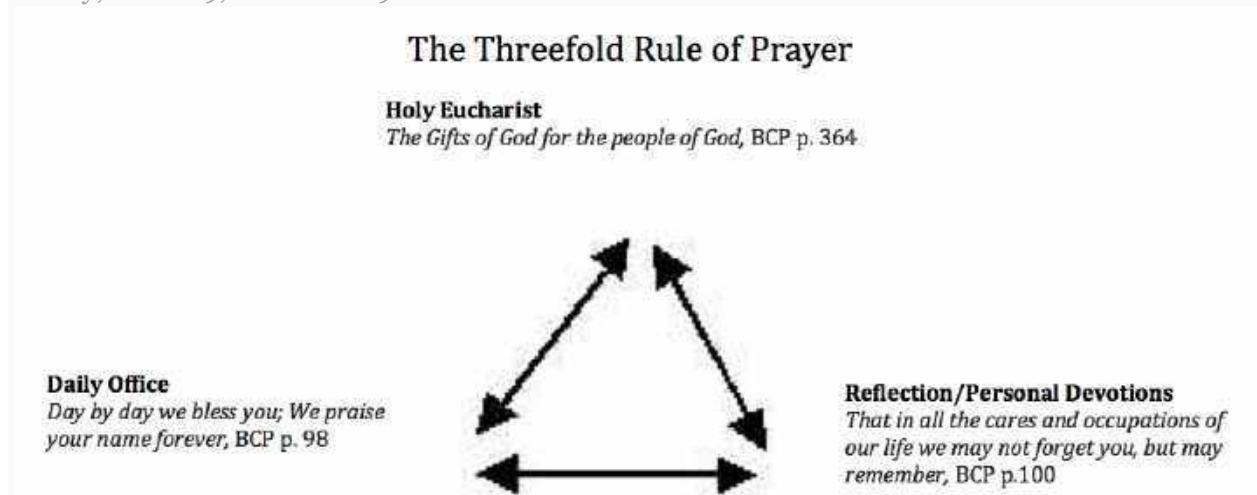
III. DISINTERESTEDNESS AND PURE LOVE.

(a) *Bossuet and Fénelon.*

The assumption that man is wholly the creature of his impulses, and that, in consequence, any attempt to escape from the bonds of

The threefold rule of prayer

Friday, March 9, 2018 at 1:29PM



Our worship tradition as Episcopalians is based on a three-part structure. Michael Ramsey, the one-hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, referred to it as the “Benedictine triangle.” Martin Thornton called it the “Catholic Threefold Rule of Prayer.” It is the Prayer Book Pattern. The three elements, Eucharist, Daily Office, and Reflection/Personal Devotions, comprise the fundamentals of a disciplined Christian spirituality in the Anglican tradition. The use of this pattern can help individuals and parishes move away from the attempt to base our prayer life on a self-made, unintegrated list of “rules” toward an integrated Rule grounded in the Book of Common Prayer.

Our times, really all times, have need of responsible citizens, workers, family and friends. People who will give themselves to the formation of their conscience in prayer and reflection, and then, to acting upon their conscience. We each have a spiritual life. We are each responsible for our spiritual life. How might we accept that responsibility so that we live as Christ's light in the world?

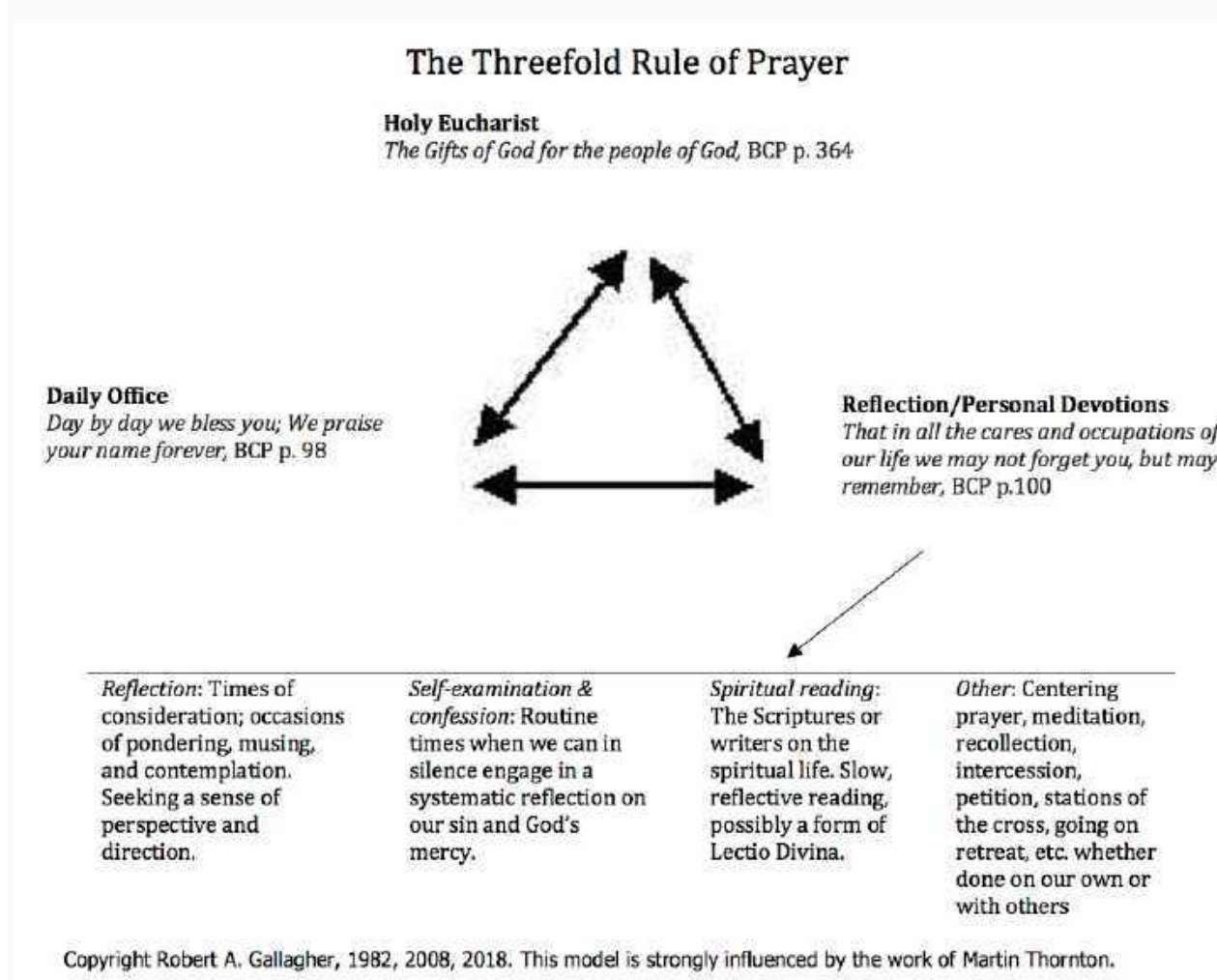
The threefold pattern is an approach to spiritual life that is within our tradition and that assumes that we each have responsibility for our spiritual life as we live within the Body of Christ.

Through the Rule the parish joins in the tradition and practice of the larger Church and so avails itself of, and participates in, that grace-filled life. It simply makes good spiritual sense to base the parish discipline on what the Church has developed and lived through the ages.

The basic shape and particular expressions of the Rule have been handed on to us in the Prayer Book. The Prayer Book is largely concerned with the Eucharist and the Office as the forms of prayer we share in common. It assumes that the individual Christian is engaged in personal forms of devotion as well. The norm of the Prayer Book and of Catholic tradition is the Holy Eucharist as the principal Sunday act of worship and the Divine Office as our daily offering of common praise.

The parish's prayer life needs balance, discipline, and order. It also needs experimentation. The Threefold Rule is designed to meet these needs. It provides a system that people may learn, in which they may come to rest and grow in maturity. The Rule recognizes the

uniqueness of each parish's and person's spiritual life and the paradox that this uniqueness is finally known only from within the Body of Christ. How the essential elements are to be expressed will vary from parish to parish. How they are enriched with additional practices will depend on each parish's particular needs and traditions. Testing and experimentation are necessary in each parish.

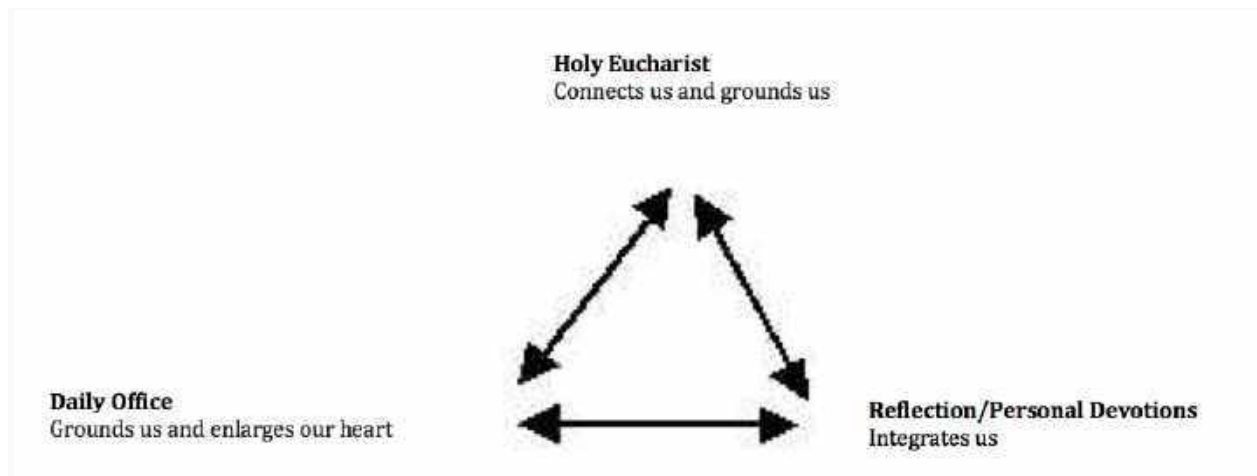


The image above highlights first the core elements of the Threefold Rule - Eucharist - Office - Reflection/Personal Devotions. And then notes several forms of Reflection/Personal Devotions -- I think the essentials are self-examination/confession and a form of reflection that effectively and efficiently aids a sense of responsibility and perspective; that nurtures holiness of life.

[A PDF of the Threefold Rule](#)

[A chart on the threefold rule](#) (Macquarrie, Thornton, Underhill, Leech)

[Two page PDF](#) - Martin Thornton on the meaning of 'Rule' & Gallagher on the Threefold Rule



What function does each element play?

Eucharist & Office: Our life in community, our reflection, and our service are nurtured from the soil of Office and Eucharist. The daily connection with Scripture and common prayer and the weekly receiving of Body and Blood orient us to the ways of eternity and feed us for “real life.” We become familiar with the ways of heaven. We chose to place ourselves in the pathways of grace.

Reflection/Personal Devotions: A form of deepening and holy application. I believe that two are essential -- self-examination/confession and reflection. To live responsibly is to live in humility and a longing for holiness; it is to live thoughtfully as we engage the day-by-day issues of our lives. In addition, I do think that spiritual reading is likely to be a help for most of us. Spending time with the writings of -- Underhill and Thornton, Leech and Gatta, Williams and Lewis, deWaal and Heyne -- will aid us in becoming at home in the pathways of grace. All the rest is a matter of temperament, circumstances, gifts and proficiency. Engage a few of them if they are helpful. Engage none if you wish. In any case never attempt to engage all of them – it will make you mad.

[A PDF of the functions](#) served by elements of the threefold rule

An unintegrated prayer life

It's easy to understand how we can drift into creating a rule of life that is based in what we find familiar and comforting. Less frequently we see some people creating a rule that is heavy and burdensome. Spiritual growth is dependent on a mix of acceptance and challenge, grace and judgement. The Threefold Rule offers that needed balance.

Michelle Heyne had an experience a few years ago that highlighted the issue. She was coaching a woman on the use of the Office. The woman told Michelle that she already had a daily practice - she did silent meditation every morning. She just could see how to fit in something else - the Office - and wasn't all that sure about why bother. Michelle affirmed that it wasn't an either/or matter. The two practices accomplished different things in the inner life. Over time the Office grounded you in the church's common life of Scriptures and praise. Her practice of silent mediation helped her feel centered and helped her see particular situations more clearly.

Example 1 - Do you really think that a parish full of people that only engage the Scriptures and praise and adoration once a week in the Eucharist is a strong enough body to provide the light needed in this world?

Start with the assumption that no parish will ever have a majority of members with the spiritual practices and proficiency of Apostolic Christians (or in Thornton's terms - The Remnant). Pastoral theology needs to begin with reality! However, it is reasonable to think that over time a priest can bring 15 - 20% of the adults to live in the Rule of the Church. And if the priest also knows how to shape a broader culture and climate that is Apostolic, that, together with the 15 - 20%, will result in a parish church that is a strong light in its community.

Example 2 - Members who have a spiritual discipline of Eucharist on Sunday and several times of contemplation or centering prayer during the week. What is the spiritual danger given the missing elements of the Threefold Rule?

Sitting in silence without a routine grounding in the objectivity of the Office may result in a lack of comforting words, as in today's Psalm 91

*1He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, *
abides under the shadow of the Almighty.*

and the useful challenge experienced in today's reading from Jeremiah

Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in the stubbornness of an evil will.

The parish development task

Focus attention on offering the weekly practice of the Sunday Eucharist and the daily practice of the Daily Prayers of the Church (the Office). And provide an adequate amount of training and coaching that would help members become competent at leaving the threefold rule -- a one session 1 1/2 hour Eucharistic Practices program, Daily Office training and coaching offered as two sessions with a week of doing the Office in between, and session on methods for self examination, how to make a private confession, and forms of spiritual reading and Lectio Divina.

If not many people in the parish say the Office on their own you might offer that training three or four times a year for a few years. Accept that there will be times when no one shows. But know that over a few years you'll end up with a number of people who know how to say the Office on their own. If the parish has a number of people who already say the Office offering training and coaching once during the year may be enough.

rag+

From Means of Grace, Hope of Glory

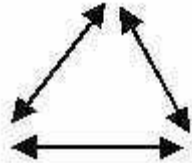
Threefold Rule of Prayer

Continue in the breaking of the bread and the prayers
BCP p.304

HOLY EUCHARIST
The Gifts of God for the people of God, BCP p. 364

DAILY OFFICE

*Day by day we bless you; We praise your
name forever, BCP p. 98*



PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

*That in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not
forget you, but may remember, BCP p.100*

Our worship tradition as Episcopalians is based on a three-part structure. Michael Ramsey, the one-hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, referred to it as the “Benedictine triangle.” Martin Thornton called it the “Catholic Threefold Rule of Prayer.” I have found myself referring to it as the “Prayer Book Way of Prayer.” The three elements, Eucharist, Daily Office, and Personal Devotions, comprise the fundamentals of a disciplined Christian spirituality in the Anglican tradition.

The use of this pattern can help individuals and parishes move away from the attempt to base our prayer life on a self-made, unintegrated list of “rules” toward an integrated Rule grounded in *The Book of Common Prayer*. It is as a parish, as a local expression of the Body of Christ, that we may fully participate in and offer this threefold pattern. As individuals we will at times participate in this pattern, carrying others in prayer. At other times we will be carried.

The active relationship among *Eucharist/Daily Office/Personal Devotions* can be seen in how the Office is deepened and enriched by a person’s personal devotions, how all three influence one another, and how the Office and personal devotions are focused and completed in the Eucharist. It’s common for parish leaders to think about improving something by focusing on the thing itself. So, if we want to improve the parish’s celebration of the Eucharist we might train those assisting at the altar to carry themselves with more grace and dignity, to hold their hands folded in front of the belly, and so on. Also, we might train the congregation for its participation. Both are worth doing and are likely to result in improvement. What we often miss is how dramatically our Eucharistic celebration is improved when a critical mass or even a core of those gathered has said the Office, in some form, that week and engaged in a way of personal devotions that nurtures and possibly stretches them.

What we bring to the Eucharist has a great impact on what happens in the Eucharist. This is a systems view of what happens in the Eucharist and of the process of liturgical renewal. Thornton notes the same reality, “Eucharist – Office – private prayer forms one whole balanced organic life,” and “private prayer is absolutely dependent on the Office and the Eucharist.”

Evelyn Underhill wrote of the role of Office and Eucharist:

The peculiarity of the Anglican tradition is the equal emphasis which it gives to the Divine Office and the Eucharist; that is to say, to Biblical and to Sacramental worship. Where this balance is disturbed, its special character is lost. ...It is, I believe, by the balanced and instructed development of these two great instruments of Christian worship—carrying them forward without deflection from their supernatural orientation, yet keeping them flexible to the changing spiritual needs and spiritual insights of the world—that the Anglican Communion will best fulfill its liturgical office within the Body of Christ. Here support and stimulus is given to the Godward life of the individual, while the solemn objectivity of true Catholic worship is preserved. (*Worship* by Evelyn Underhill, 1936, pp.335-336)

Underhill refers to the pattern we see in *The Book of Common Prayer*. About two-thirds of the book is taken up with the Eucharist, the Office, and materials to support those acts of worship (lectionaries, the Psalms). *The Book of Common Prayer* isn't a book of personal devotions, but its spirituality does assume that the Christian will find ways of personal devotion that are appropriate to their own personality and growth in love. The "equal emphasis" that she writes of isn't the distortion that many Anglicans fell into of making use of the Office as an alternative to the Eucharist on Sundays. She's affirming a balance that is more to be seen in a parish that celebrates the Holy Eucharist each Sunday as its primary expression of worship and offers Morning, Noonday or Evening Prayer on all, or most, of the other days of the week.

Above from *Fill all Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008.

“The prayer and life of each member is wholly dependent on the health of the total organism”
 “Eucharist – Office – private prayer forms one whole balanced organic life” and “private prayer is absolutely dependent on the Office and the Eucharist” Martin Thornton

	Eucharist	Daily Office The Daily Prayers of the Church John MacQuarrie – “built chiefly out of the psalms, the scriptures and the prayers of the Church”	Personal Devotions Thornton sees three forms -increasing our knowledge, love & communion with God (mental prayer) -saying our prayers – petition, intercession, etc. (colloquy) -momentary acts of prayer throughout the day; practicing the presence of God (recollection)
Martin Thornton <i>Christian Proficiency</i>	“Living heart of the Body of Christ” ”Centered on our Lord Jesus Christ”	“Its continual beat or pulse” ”objectively ‘give’ to God Almighty”	“circulation of the blood which gives life and strength to its several members” “inspired by the Holy Spirit” “that prayer done physically alone, according to ones unique gifts, personality and temperament”
John MacQuarrie	“The Eucharist sums up in itself Christian worship ..It seems to include everything. It combines Word and Sacrament; its appeal is to spirit and to sense ...; it is communion with God and communion with man Gathers up in itself the meaning of the church; its whole action implies and sets forth our mutual interdependence in the Body of Christ; it unites us with the Church of the past ...; an anticipation of the heavenly banquet.” In <i>Paths in Spirituality</i>	“...a way by which we keep ourselves in constant awareness of the divine order; an order of love and justice which embraces and underlies all order “The cantus firmus is the recurring rhythmic pattern which serves as the basis for the music, giving it a unity and consistency. ...it is the recurring cycle of prayer and communing with God which gives, as it were, the dominant ‘set’ to life. But over that cantus firmus all kinds of distinct melodies may be heard interweaving in a complex texture” “...the offices keep us in touch with the whole church. They do not impede the individual’s spiritual growth, but both nourish it and supply a standard by which it is to be judged” “..we need immersion too in Christian truth if we are rightly to interpret life and culture” In <i>Paths in Spirituality</i>	“..the modes and times of prayer, and the balance of prayer and action, are matters which each has to work out for himself.The aim of all is the vision of God and communion with God – or rather, we should say an ever-deepening vision and communion, for we have seen that the Christian pilgrimage does not come to an end but always keeps its dynamic character. We would agree with St. Gregory of Nyssa: “The perfect life is the one whose progress into perfection is not limited by any boundary.’ And he gave a very good reason for this teaching: God is inexhaustible, and there can be no end to our participation and exploration in him.” <i>Principles of Christian Theology</i>

<p>Evelyn Underhill</p>	<p>“For the fully Christian life is a Eucharistic life: that is, a natural life conformed to the pattern of Jesus, given in its wholeness to God, laid on His altar as a sacrifice of love, and consecrated, transformed by His inpouring life, to be used to give life and food to other souls.” <i>The Mystery of Sacrifice: A Meditation on the Liturgy</i></p>	<p>“The real significance of the Divine Office is that in its recitation the individual or group enters the ancient cycle of prayer, by which day by day and hour by hour the church in the name of all creation adores and implores the eternal God” Evelyn Underhill In <i>Paths in Spirituality</i>, MacQuarrie</p>	<p>“The touch of God upon the soul, which is the prevent cause of all worship, is received by us as we are: creatures of sense and spirit, at various stages of enlightenment and growth. Our response to it is and must be conditioned by our here and now human situation; and by our particular education, capacities and temperament. We use what we have, and realize what we can; and since no two souls process an identical equipment, this is the general reason for the various kinds and degrees of prayer ...” <i>Worship</i></p>
<p>Kenneth Leech</p>	<p>“We share the Eucharist in order to be able to share the world. God feed us so we can help to recreate the world. It is the vision of a recreated, transformed world which lies behind – and beyond – the sometime elaborate ritual which has come to surround the celebration of the Eucharist .. candles, incense, brightly colored vestments, bells ...” <i>True Prayer</i></p>	<p>“The value of the Office is its objectivity. It is a means by which we pray with the whole church, uniting our prayer with that of millions of other Christians living and dead. This is true whether one is alone or in a group, for the Office is essentially a corporate act. It is objective too in that it does not depend on our feelings, but gives our prayer life a regularity and a disciplined framework.” <i>True Prayer</i></p>	<p>“...prayer must involve the unifying of the personality, the integration of mind and heart into one center.... Without self discovery there can be no further progress. ‘In order to find God whom we can only find in and through the depths of our own soul, we must first find ourselves.’ Without self-knowledge our love remains superficial.” <i>Soul</i></p>

What kind of social vision emerges from the Anglo-Catholic tradition?

First, it is a corporate vision. It is a social vision, a vision of a cooperative society, a community bonded together by a fundamental and unbreakable solidarity, a community of equals....

Secondly, it is a materialist vision. It is a vision which is deeply and unashamedly materialistic, which values the creation, which rejoices in the physical, in the flesh, in human sexuality, and which is rooted in the principle that matter is the vehicle of spirit, not its enemy. When [William] Temple said that Christianity was the most materialistic of all religions, he stood within a long tradition of incarnational and materialism....

Thirdly, it is a vision of transformation, of a transformed society, not simply an improved one. At the heart of Anglo-Catholic spirituality is the eucharistic offering with its two-fold emphasis on offering and consecration. Bread and wine, fruits of the earth and work of human hands, products not only of nature but of the industrial process, are, at the eucharistic offertory, brought within the redemptive process....

Fourthly, this tradition is a rebel tradition. The Tractarian movement began as a critique of the church/Tory alliance and as a protest against state control of the church.... And this culture of dissent was intensified by the fact that ritualism became a criminal offence in the second phase of the movement. So Anglo-Catholicism and a rebellious spirit became allies....

Finally, the Anglo-Catholic social vision is one which moves beyond the Christian community and is concerned with the working out of God's purposes in the upheavals and crises of world history. It is a Kingdom theology rather than a church theology

....Source: *Kenneth Leech, The Renewal of Social Vision: A Dissident Anglo-Catholic Perspective, in The Anglo-Catholic Social Conscience: Two Critical Essays (Croyden: Jubilee Group, [1991]), 1-11.*

Catholic social doctrine

Catholic social doctrine has always tried to find an equilibrium between respect for human liberty, including the right to private property and subsidiarity, and concern for the whole society, including the weakest and poorest. Catholic social teaching, commonly abbreviated as CST, is an area of Catholic doctrine concerning matters of human dignity and the common good in society. The ideas address oppression, the role of the state, subsidiarity, social organization, concern for social justice, and issues of wealth distribution.

As with the principles above, there is no official list of key themes. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has identified these seven key themes of Catholic Social Teaching set out here. Other sources identify more or fewer key themes based on their reading of the key documents of the social magisterium. Sanctity of human life and dignity of the person[edit]

The foundational principle of all Catholic social teachings is the sanctity of human life. Catholics believe in an inherent dignity of the human person starting from conception through to natural death. They believe that human life must be valued infinitely above material possessions. Pope John Paul II wrote and spoke extensively on the topic of the inviolability of human life and dignity in his watershed encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, (Latin for "The Gospel of Life").

Catholics oppose acts considered attacks and affronts to human life, including abortion, fornication (including contraception), capital punishment, euthanasia, genocide, torture, the direct and intentional targeting of noncombatants in war, and every deliberate taking of innocent human life. In the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (Latin for "Joy and Hope"), it is written that "from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care." The church did not historically not oppose war in all circumstances. The church's moral theology has generally emphasized just war theory since the mid 3rd century. However, Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* says that in light of modern weapons of mass destruction, it is increasingly harder to invoke the criteria of a just war, and it calls for an end to war. The post-Vatican II Catechism of the Catholic Church said of capital punishment:

The traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude, presupposing full ascertainment of the identity and responsibility of the offender, recourse to the death penalty, when this is the only practicable way to defend the lives of human beings effectively against the aggressor.

"If, instead, bloodless means are sufficient to defend against the aggressor and to protect the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.

"Today, in fact, given the means at the State's disposal to effectively repress crime by rendering inoffensive the one who has committed it, without depriving him definitively of the possibility of redeeming himself, cases of absolute necessity for suppression of the offender 'today ... are very rare, if not practically non-existent.' [John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* 56.]."[62][63]

Applying this argument to the situation in the United States today, in 2005 the USCCB launched "a

major Catholic campaign to end the use of the death penalty." [64] In 2018, Pope Francis changed the Catechism to oppose all uses of the death penalty in the modern world, while not going so far as to call it intrinsically evil:

Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good.

Today, however, there is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes. In addition, a new understanding has emerged of the significance of penal sanctions imposed by the state. Lastly, more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that “the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person”, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide.

Believing men and women are made in the image and likeness of God, Catholic doctrine teaches to respect all humans based on an inherent dignity. According to John Paul II, every human person "is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God." Catholics oppose racial prejudice and other forms of discrimination. In 2007 the USCCB wrote:

Catholic teaching about the dignity of life calls us ... to prevent genocide and attacks against noncombatants; to oppose racism; and to overcome poverty and suffering. Nations are called to protect the right to life by seeking effective ways to combat evil and terror without resorting to armed conflicts except as a last resort, always seeking first to resolve disputes by peaceful means. We revere the lives of children in the womb, the lives of persons dying in war and from starvation, and indeed the lives of all human beings as children of God.

A belief in the inherent dignity of the human person also requires that basic human needs are adequately met, including food, health care, shelter, etc. The bishops have seen this as a basis for the support of social welfare programs and of governmental economic policies that promote equitable distribution of income and access to essential goods and services.

Call to family, community, and participation in the pursuit of the Common Good

According to the Book of Genesis, the Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone". The Catholic Church teaches that man is not only a sacred but also a social person and that families are the first and most basic units of a society. It advocates a complementarian view of marriage, family life, and religious leadership. Full human development takes place in relationship with others. The family—based on marriage (between a man and a woman)—is the first and fundamental unit of society and is a sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children. Together families form communities, communities a state and together all across the world each human is part of the human family. How these communities organize themselves politically, economically and socially is thus of the highest importance. Each institution must be judged by how much it enhances, or is a detriment to, the life and dignity of human persons.

Catholic Social Teaching opposes collectivist approaches such as Communism but at the same time it also rejects unrestricted laissez-faire policies and the notion that a free market automatically produces social justice. The state has a positive moral role to play as no society will achieve a just and equitable distribution of resources with a totally free market. All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society and, under the principle of subsidiarity, state functions should be carried out at the lowest level that is practical. A particular contribution of Catholic social teaching is a strong appreciation for the role of intermediary organizations such as labor unions, community organizations, fraternal groups and parish churches.

Rights and responsibilities; social justice

Every person has a fundamental right to life and to the necessities of life. The right to exercise religious freedom publicly and privately by individuals and institutions along with freedom of conscience need to be constantly defended. In a fundamental way, the right to free expression of religious beliefs protects all other rights.

The church supports private property and teaches that "every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own." The right to private property is not absolute, however, and is limited by the concepts of the "universal destiny of the goods of the earth" and of the social mortgage. It is theoretically moral and just for its members to destroy property used in an evil way by others, or for the state to redistribute wealth from those who have unjustly hoarded it.

Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. Rights should be understood and exercised in a moral framework rooted in the dignity of the human person and social justice. Those that have more have a greater responsibility to contribute to the common good than those who have less.

We live our lives by a subconscious philosophy of freedom and work. The encyclical *Laborem exercens* (1981) by Pope John Paul II, describes work as the essential key to the whole social question. The very beginning is an aspect of the human vocation. Work includes every form of action by which the world is transformed and shaped or even simply maintained by human beings. It is through work that we achieve fulfilment. So in order to fulfil ourselves we must cooperate and work together to create something good for all of us, a common good. What we call justice is that state of social harmony in which the actions of each person best serve the common good.

Freedom according to Natural Law is the empowerment of good. Being free we have responsibilities. With human relationships we have responsibilities towards each other. This is the basis of human rights. The Roman Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, in their document "The Common Good" (1996) stated that, "The study of the evolution of human rights shows that they all flow from the one fundamental right: the right to life. From this derives the right to a society which makes life more truly human: religious liberty, decent work, housing, health care, freedom of speech, education, and the right to raise and provide for a family" (section 37). Having the right to life must mean that everyone else has a responsibility towards me. To help sustain and develop my life. This gives me the right to whatever I need to accomplish without compromising the mission of others, and it lays on others the corresponding responsibility to help me. All justice is the power of God compensated solely in terms of individual relationships.

The Ten Commandments reflect the basic structure of the Natural Law insofar as it applies to humanity. The first three are the foundation for everything that follows: The Love of God, the Worship of God, the sanctity of God and the building of people around God. The other seven Commandments are to do with the love of humanity and describe the different ways in which we must serve the common good : Honour your father and mother, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour, you shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbour (Exodus 20:3–17). Our Lord Jesus Christ Summarized the Commandments with the New Commandment: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 13:34, 15:9–17). The mystery of Jesus is a mystery of love. Our relationship with God is not one of fear, of slavery or oppression; it is a relationship of serene trust born of a free choice motivated by love. Pope John Paul II stated that love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. By his law God does not intend to coerce our will, but to set it free from everything that could compromise its authentic dignity and its full realization. (Pope John Paul II to government leaders, 5 November 2000.)

Preferential option for the poor and vulnerable

Jesus taught that on the Day of Judgement God will ask what each of us did to help the poor and needy: "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." This is reflected in the church's canon law, which states, "The Christian faithful are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources."

Through our words, prayers and deeds we must show solidarity with, and compassion for, the poor. When instituting public policy we must always keep the "preferential option for the poor" at the forefront of our minds. The moral test of any society is "how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor."

Pope Benedict XVI has taught that "love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel".[78] This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all who are marginalized in our nation and beyond—unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, and victims of injustice and oppression.

Dignity of work

Society must pursue economic justice and the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Employers must not "look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but ... respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character." Employers contribute to the common good through the services or products they provide and by creating jobs that uphold the dignity and rights of workers.

Workers have a right to work, to earn a living wage, and to form trade unions to protect their interests. All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. Workers also have responsibilities—to provide a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, to treat employers and co-workers with respect, and to carry out their work in ways that contribute to the common good. Workers must "fully and faithfully" perform the work they have agreed to do.

In 1933, the Catholic Worker Movement was founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. It was committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the marginalized and poorest in Society. Today over 185 Catholic Worker communities continue to protest injustice, war, racial prejudice, and violence of all forms.

Solidarity and the universal destiny of the goods of the Earth

Pope John Paul II wrote in the 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo reissocialis*, "Solidarity is undoubtedly a Christian virtue. It seeks to go beyond itself to total gratuity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It leads to a new vision of the unity of humankind, a reflection of God's triune intimate life. ..." It is a unity that binds members of a group together.

All the peoples of the world belong to one human family. We must be our brother's keeper, though we may be separated by distance, language or culture. Jesus teaches that we must each love our neighbors as ourselves and in the parable of the Good Samaritan we see that our compassion should extend to all people. Solidarity includes the Scriptural call to welcome the stranger among us—including immigrants seeking work, a safe home, education for their children, and a decent life for their families.

Solidarity at the international level primarily concerns the Global South. For example, the church has habitually insisted that loans be forgiven on many occasions, particularly during Jubilee years. Charity to individuals or groups must be accompanied by transforming unjust political, economic and social structures.

The world and its goods were created for the use and benefit of all of God's creatures and any structures that impede the realization of this fundamental goal are not right. This concept ties in with those of Social Justice and of the limits to private property.

Care for God's creation

A Biblical vision of justice is much more comprehensive than civil equity; it encompasses right relationships between all members of God's creation. Stewardship of creation: The world's goods are available for humanity to use only under a "social mortgage" which carries with it the responsibility to protect the environment. The "goods of the earth" are gifts from God, and they are intended by God for the benefit of everyone. Man was given dominion over all creation as sustainer rather than as exploiter, and is commanded to be a good steward of the gifts God has given him. We cannot use and abuse the natural resources God has given us with a destructive consumer mentality.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

An Anglican Approach

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S.L.G. PRESS
Convent of the Incarnation
Fairacres, Oxford

PREFACE

This pamphlet contains the text of a lecture given under the auspices of the Anglican Centre in Rome, at the *Angelicum* University in Rome in the autumn of 1970, to an audience consisting largely of members of religious communities, both men and women. It examines briefly the attitude of a number of representative Anglican writers towards the religious or monastic life in three different periods since the Reformation: first in the seventeenth century, in many ways still the classical age of Anglican divinity; then in the nineteenth century, the time in which the Religious Life came to birth again in our Church; and, finally, in the present day. This contemporary section is based on the report, *Religious Communities in the World of Today*, produced for the Church of England's Advisory Council on Religious Communities in 1970.

At a time when many things in all the Churches are being shaken, the religious communities are showing a remarkable power of adaptation to new circumstances, and of renewal according to the original vision of their founders. They are also seen more and more to be signs of the unity in Christ and the Spirit which exists across all the barriers which separate Christians from one another. I hope that this small study of the particular Anglican way of understanding this gift of the Spirit to the Church, may be of value and of interest to Christians of many different traditions, and especially to religious, who are seeking to understand what the Spirit is saying to the Churches about the renewal of this way of following Christ and bearing witness to his kingdom.

A. M. Allchin

AT FIRST SIGHT it may seem strange to speak of a specifically Anglican approach to this subject; for though religious communities have existed in the Churches of the Anglican Communion for the last century and a quarter, and though such communities are now well established and widely recognised, nevertheless their numbers are not large,¹ and in general not much has been written from the Anglican point of view on the theology of this way of life. We must not, therefore, exaggerate either the size or the importance of the phenomenon which we are discussing.

On the other hand, there may be a particular value in examining this question from this vantage point at the present time. On the one side, the revival of religious communities in the Churches of European Protestantism during the last twenty-five years suggests that we are dealing with a matter of increasing ecumenical significance. The impulse towards this form of life is to be found in places where hitherto it had not been expected. Not only at Taizé, but in numerous other places in France, Switzerland, Germany and Scandinavia, communities both of women and of men have sprung into existence, and have begun to lead Protestants to think again about the Reformation rejection of monasticism. On the other hand, within the Roman Catholic Church, as a part of the general activity of theological re-appraisal which has followed on Vatican II, fundamental questions about the meaning and nature of this way of life are being asked. Adaptations to new circumstances, and new realisations of old principles are leading to sometimes startling changes of attitude.

In such a situation, the experience of a Church which has never been able to rest wholly content with the divisions of the sixteenth century, but which has always sought to reconcile crucial elements of Reformation practice and teaching with a maintenance of many elements of Catholic tradition, may be of some value. For three hundred years after the Reformation this Church was without the witness of this distinctive form of life, and for this very reason, it sometimes contains a vivid sense of the value of what has been restored over the last one hundred and twenty years.

I.

The attitude of the Reformers, both on the continent of Europe and in England, towards the monastic life was not always wholly clear and consistent. In the first place, there was the very evident rejection of the monastic tradition as it was then known. This involved the affirmation of the value of Christian callings in the world, as well as the repudiation of any idea that it was only in the cloister that a fully Christian life could be lived. It involved the assertion of the value of the vocation to marriage, and the freedom of the clergy to marry. It was based on the repudiation of the system of vows, which seemed to the Reformers to make the monastic life into a work of man, an elaborate human contrivance to win our way towards God who wills to give himself freely to us, but who will not let himself be bought by human efforts. But at the same time, the Reformers were not unaware that many of the Fathers of the Church, to whose authority most of them appealed, had been monks and had valued the monastic life highly. Thus it was that they did not totally deny the possibility that in its original intention the monastic institution had had good ends in view. In Lutheranism, for example, despite the example of Luther himself, there seems to have been a kind of hesitation on this subject.

In England, the monasteries were dissolved in the 1530's by the action of the King. A notable seventeenth century Anglican authority declared on this point, 'We fear that covetousness had a great oar in the boat, and that sundry of the principal actors had a greater aim at the *goods* of the Church, than at the *good* of the Church.'² It is true that the English reformers in general endorsed the Reformation repudiation of the monastic system as it had been known in the later middle ages and concluded that the practice and theory of the vows was unscriptural and indefensible. But with the development during the seventeenth century of a distinctively Anglican theological position, with its increasing appeal to the authority of the Fathers, a more positive attitude towards monasticism becomes evident on the part of a number of leading theologians. Archbishop John Bramhall (1594-1663), who has already been quoted, writes for instance, 'We believe that foundations which were good in their original institution, ought not to

be destroyed for accessory abuses, or the faults of particular persons, and, leaving aside the question of vows, he concludes, 'I do not see why monasteries might not well enough agree with reformed devotion.'³

In the Church of England during this seventeenth century, there was one theologian who went into this question at some length, and one living example of a community which, without being monastic, had a distinctively monastic quality to its life. The writer in question was Herbert Thorndike (1598-1672), the community the family at Little Gidding. In both cases we may see the beginnings of reflection on the nature of the life, and its relation to that of the Church as a whole. Thorndike in his discussion of the question is concerned in the first place to distinguish clearly between the monastic and the ordained state. In his view the confusion of these two things in the middle ages had been one of the causes of the decadence of the monasteries in the period before the Reformation. He points out that in their origin the monasteries had been predominantly lay. In his view they represent a calling within the Church which is 'not essential to the constitution of the Church', as that of the ordained ministry is, 'but advantageous' to it. In what does this advantage consist? 'In the maintenance of that retirement from the world in the reasons of our actions, wherein our common Christianity consisteth, by that visible retirement, wherein this profession consisteth.'⁴ In other words all Christians are to be in the world but not of the world. Some Christians by a visible withdrawal from some of the responsibilities and concerns of daily life, give an example to all Christians of freedom from exaggerated care and from conformity to the world, and thus reveal to the whole Church something of its own true nature.

In another work, which was not published during his own life-time, Thorndike goes even further and says of monasticism, 'seeing it is a perfection to Christianity, it is certainly a blot in the reformation which we profess, that we are without it. . . . How great an advantage is it to Christianity to have before the eyes of the world the examples of them that wholly forego it: to warn them that live in it, to use it as if they used it not; that it is for the service of God, not the satisfaction of themselves.'⁵ Such an aspiration was not wholly theoretical in seventeenth century England, for in at least one place, Little Gidding, these truths were seen embodied in the lives of men and women. There the

members of the Ferrar family, some thirty persons in all, including three generations, elders and children together, lived a life of consecration to God, which both its admirers and critics could only see as being in some way monastic. Within the context of the family, Nicholas Ferrar (1592-1637), the director and inspirer of the whole enterprise, and two of his nieces, lived in a voluntary consecration to single life which was not felt as in any way disparaging the married state of other members of the community.

One of the most interesting accounts of the family's way of life, from the theological point of view, occurs almost incidentally in the life of Archbishop John Williams. Although not strictly accurate in all points of detail, this description is highly perceptive as to the spirit and meaning of the place:

As alms and fasting were frequent with them, so prayers and watching, with reading and singing psalms were *continually* in their practice. Note the word *continually*; for there was no intermission, day or night. Four times every day they offered up their supplications to God, twice in the words of the Common-Prayer in the Church; twice in their family with several petitions for their own needs, or for such as desired, upon some special occasions, to be remembered by them to God. At all times, one or more, by their constitutions were drawn aside to some private holy exercise. By night they kept watch in the house of the Lord, and two by turns did supply the office for the rest, from which they departed not till the morning. Their scope was to be ready like wise virgins with oil in their lamps when the Bridegroom came. This was the hardest part of their discipline, that they kept sentinel at all hours and seasons, to expect the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Archbishop Spotswood tells us of the like, *Anno* 510, that St. Mungo founded a monastery in Wales, and took order that the monks had day and night divided amongst them, one company succeeding another; so that there were some always in the Church, praying and praising God. In which, and in all the rest, what was there offensive? Nay what not to be admired? . . . God be glorified for such, whose prayers were powerful and incessant to pierce the heavens. The whole land was better for

their sanctity. They fasted, that famine might not be inflicted upon our common gluttony. They abridged themselves of all pleasures, that vengeance might not come down upon the voluptuousness of this riotous age. They kept vigil all night, that the day of the Lord might not come upon us like a thief unawares, that sleep in security. The whole world was the better for their contempt of the world. They were in the world, not of the world.⁶

It is not difficult to see in this passage points of a genuinely theological character. There is the insistence on the eschatological significance of the Religious Life, a life which is lived always looking toward the end, lived in the spirit of the Gospel parables, being ready for the coming of the Lord as a thief in the night. There is the insistence on continual prayer, a point which bulks so large in the earliest monastic tradition and in the East till this day, and which is itself eloquent of the way in which the kingdom of eternity may by anticipation be realised in time. There is the sense of the interaction between this way of life and the way of life of those more obviously in the world, the sense of the value that there is for the whole Church, to have those within it, who being free in this particular way from the anxieties and obsessions of time, help all Christians to live in time with a greater spirit of freedom in the service of God. Hacket was not alone in being influenced by Little Gidding. Many people knew of the family's life of prayer, or came to share in it for a few days at a time. Although he nowhere mentions Little Gidding specifically, its influence can be felt, for instance, in the sermons of Mark Frank (1613-1664), one who as a young man was intimately connected with the junior Nicholas Ferrar. It would be interesting to trace its influence in other places too.

Dispersed during the Civil War, the family at Little Gidding had no direct successors or imitators, though there were other households which lived a very full life of ordered prayer. But the memory of Little Gidding remained in the Church, as a witness to a truth and a reality which was not wholly to be forgotten.

II.

The establishment of the first of the nineteenth century communities for women dates from 1845, the year of Newman's conversion, though the possibility of the foundation of such an institution had been in men's minds for some years previously. From that year onwards a considerable number of sisterhoods were founded, so that by the end of the nineteenth century the number of religious in the Church of England had reached something like the figure of two thousand, where it remains. In 1866 the first stable community of men came into being, the Society of St. John the Evangelist at Cowley, Oxford, to be followed in the last decade of the century by three more men's communities: the Society of the Divine Compassion in East London, the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield, and the Society of the Sacred Mission at Kelham. In the present century, while some of the early communities have declined or died out, others have been founded, among them the Benedictine Abbey of Nashdom, the rapidly growing Society of St. Francis, and a number of contemplative communities for women. E. B. Pusey (1800-1882), writing of the earlier stages of this movement could say, 'The striking characteristic of this history, and that which makes it . . . the more to be God's work, has been the very absence of design. It was not planned by man: it originated in the providential leadings of God. He began: he carried it on: he gave strength: he will give the increase. It was not the work even of thoughtful persons, judging *a priori* that such institutions would be a blessing to the English Church. It was not planned, it grew.'

A detailed and purely objective study of the whole movement would bear out the truth of this last sentence. There was no central controlling authority, no one outstanding theoretician. Rather it was the general teaching of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, above all of Pusey and Newman, that man could give himself wholly to the service and love of God, which led women and men to respond to a call which they heard within themselves to find again the way of dedicated common life in poverty, chastity and obedience. It was this preaching with its urgent call to holiness, coupled with a renewed assurance that the Church of England was part of the one Catholic Church and therefore contained

within itself unexpected powers of renewal and newness of life, which made it possible for something new, and yet old, to come into existence. The founders of the first sisterhoods were, many of them, busy parish priests, most of them married, and able but theologically untrained women. There was little systematic theologising about the nature of the 'Religious Life', and little scholarly study of the history of the monastic tradition.

There were of course exceptions. J.M. Neale (1818-66), the church historian and liturgist, who founded the Society of St. Margaret at East Grinstead, shows in his sermons to the Sisters a wide knowledge of and reflection on the whole development of the monastic way. T.T. Carter (1808-1901), who founded the Community of St. John the Baptist, at Clewer near Windsor, the largest of the nineteenth century sisterhoods, and who often acted as a spokesman for the communities in the central councils of the Church, in this, as in other matters, shows real theological insight. R.M. Benson (1824-1915), the founder of the Society of St. John the Evangelist at Cowley, and still the most striking monastic figure in modern Anglican history, could write of the subject from the inside, and with him we find a truly creative spiritual and theological vision.⁷ From the teaching of the latter two men we may take certain salient points.

a) First, there is the underlying assumption of the unity of the varied forms of the religious and monastic tradition. All the nineteenth century Anglican communities were engaged in external activities, teaching, preaching, nursing, caring for children and the aged, for instance. But none were active in an exclusive sense. In all, the primary place of prayer, of the seven-fold office chanted in English, of the life of the community centred around the frequent celebration of the Eucharist, was constantly underlined. It was a life which overflowed into activity, not an activity supported by a life. It is this which gives what Thomas Merton calls 'a special monastic quality' to the Anglican attitude towards the Religious Life. *

b) There was the insistence that this is a life lived within the whole body of the Church, in the communion of the Church, It was perhaps especially necessary to underline this at a time when the Communities were little understood in the Church at large, and were often viewed with suspicion and hostility by both clergy and laity. But

perhaps there is a deeper concern in Fr. Benson's evident insistence on this point, a desire to show this particular calling not in isolation from but in relation to the other callings which God gives within the body of the faithful.

Our Society is not a society drawn out of the Church, but drawn together within the Church. And it is not drawn together as supplying something wanting in the Communion of Saints, but as the means to arrive at a recognition of that communion. The object of all religious societies is to gather up, and, as it were, focus the love which ought to animate the whole body of the Church Catholic. . . . It is important for us to remember that the love which animates any society of this kind is derived from the great body of Christendom at large. There are special gifts of God indeed to the Society, but only as it is a society within the Church.⁸

It follows from this that the Religious Life, while recognised as having its own distinctive gift or charisma, is yet not something apart from the life of the whole Christian people. It is a way of life which can only be understood in relation to, and interaction with, other ways. 'We must remember that our life as religious is not something over and above the ordinary Christian life. It is only the ordinary Christian life developed under such regulations as are rendered necessary for individuals, because the Church at large has fallen away from her true spiritual calling of conscious and habitual union with Christ.'⁹ As one of the most far seeing of Fr. Benson's early companions, Fr. George Congreve, wrote, 'The religious are not a new sect; we do not represent a new theory in religion or sociology . . . We represent only a resolve among a few serious Christians to go back personally to the original law of Christ, to try to practise Christianity as literally and fully as we can.'¹⁰

c) Behind all this lies the conviction expressed by Pusey that this form of life is a divine and not a human creation, that it has its roots in the call of God, which is a creative, continuous and progressive reality. This word of God calls into being a new community, it makes possible a permanent and life-long commitment, which is a sign of the continued presence of the risen Christ in the midst of his people, and of the

diversity of the gifts and energies of the Holy Spirit. It is in the light of this prior conviction, and only in this light, that Benson and Carter examine and discuss the question of vows. As we have already seen, the Reformers rejected the religious or monastic vow, partly because they believed that it had no warrant in Holy Scripture, but still more because it seemed to make the whole religious life into a legally binding work of man. The bishops of the Church of England and the majority of the Anglican theologians of the mid-nineteenth century inherited and maintained this view, which had become traditional in the Church since the Reformation. It very soon, however, became evident that the members of the communities themselves felt convinced of the need for life-long vows as an expression of the way of life upon which they had entered. Only gradually, however, did it become possible for the bishops and Convocations of the Church to recognise and sanction the practice. For many years there was controversy, sometimes heated, over this question of life-long vows. Only in 1890 did the Convocations formally authorise the taking of life vows, and it was still later before the relations of some of the communities with the hierarchy were regularised.

In this process of change, the position both of Carter and Benson was of crucial importance. Carter in particular could understand something of the force of the argument against vows since he had himself held it in his earlier writings on the subject. His final position therefore is a carefully balanced one, which while it maintains the value of the vows, states clearly the primacy of the divine vocation. On the basis of his reading of early monastic history, Carter could write, 'It can hardly be too strongly affirmed that to identify vows with the necessary integrity or security of the Religious Life, is entirely to ignore its earlier history, to disparage the first callings of the Spirit in his pentecostal fullness, and to deny the all-sufficiency of the grace which alone constitutes in the place of a living creation of God the creature's own vocal act and outward covenant.' But, of course, such is not the true meaning and purpose of the vows which arise naturally out of the life which is prior to them, and so Carter can continue, 'On the other hand to deny the lawfulness or moral expedience of vows . . . would be to lose sight altogether of the very principle of special Divine vocations, to cast distrust on the power of God to sustain the life in which he predestines his own elect to serve him.'¹¹ The vows then are legitimate,

valuable, even in a sense necessary, so long as they are understood as the expression and safeguard of the life of the Spirit, the expression of man's response to the prior call of God. As R.M. Benson put it, 'We must remember that vows do not constitute the religious life.' What constitutes it is 'the life of the Spirit within the heart of those who take the vows. The vows are the shelter of the Spirit.'¹²

We touch here on questions of the greatest importance for the theology of the religious life. It is noteworthy that both on the question of the vows, and on the question of the inter-relation between the community and the Church as a whole, the positions of the nineteenth century Anglican pioneers come very close to those put forward in our own time by those engaged in this revival in European Protestantism. Here, too, despite the weight given in both Lutheran and Calvinist tradition to the positions of the Reformers, the vows have re-established themselves. But they have been understood precisely in relationship to the prior act of God who calls, as means towards freedom, not as signs of bondage. In this way they become not a sign of man's seeking to work his own way up to God, but a sign of man's acceptance of God's gift and God's faithfulness. Far from denying the doctrine of justification by faith they may be seen as a striking expression of it. If this is indeed so, it is clear that this is a fact of no little importance both for the future of the monastic or religious tradition, and for the growth of Christian unity.¹³

III.

We pass now rapidly from the nineteenth century to the present day. As has already been stated it was only slowly that the communities won general acceptance and official recognition throughout the provinces of the Anglican Communion. In the provinces of Canterbury and York, it was not until 1935 that an Advisory Council was set up to assist the bishops and communities in all matters concerned with the relations between the communities and the Church at large. This body now consists of six members appointed by the hierarchy and nine elected by the communities.¹⁴ In 1970 it published a brief document entitled *Religious Communities in the World of Today*, which contains what is perhaps the first attempt on the part of a representative Anglican body to speak on the subject of the theology of the Religious Life.

As the Chairman of the Council, the Bishop of Exeter, points out in his Preface, the publication of the booklet is an indirect consequence of the Second Vatican Council. However, even before the appearance of *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Council's decree on the subject of the Religious Life, the Anglican communities had been gathering together to re-assess and re-evaluate the principles on which their life is based. The bishops of the Lambeth Conference in 1968 had, furthermore, called upon the communities 'to take their part in the present renewal of the Church, in particular by seeking to renew themselves according to the priorities of the gospel, and the original intention of their foundation.'¹⁵ It is worth noting that in the earlier part of the Resolution of the Conference, the bishops speak of the witness of the communities to 'the absolute character of the claims of God on the life of man, the fruitfulness of a life given to prayer and service, and to the unity of the Church across the divisions which at present exist.' Whereas in earlier Conferences there was a tendency to appraise the communities primarily in terms of the works which they perform, here there is a clear recognition of the value of their life in itself, a sign of a development in Anglican thinking on this subject.

Following the Resolution of the Lambeth Conference, the booklet contains a short statement of little more than three tightly packed

pages, produced by a working party set up by the Advisory Council. Its first paragraph runs as follows:

* Religious communities of men and women vowed to God have existed in the Church for many centuries and do exist today in many parts of the world, in the Anglican Communion as in other Christian traditions. However varied the practice of these communities, their common purpose may be summarised thus:

- a) To stand before all men on behalf of the Church, bearing witness to the presence of God within and beyond all things, and to the coming of his Kingdom;
- b) To be signs of the total commitment which, in varying ways, Christ demands from all who would follow him;
- c) To express the God-given value of all right human relationships by offering an instance of the Christian commitment to love through their life in community;
- d) To be centres of worship where prayer to God is practised and taught, and sources from which others may draw encouragement and inspiration.
- e) To give to individual men and women who hear the call of Christ, the freedom to devote themselves permanently to the loving service of God and man in a disciplined common life.

Looking at these statements one by one, we see in them first of all an affirmation of the eschatological significance of the Religious Life. It is a witness to the presence of God who, while he is within all things—active in sustaining his world in being, making himself known in his creative words and energies, ever coming when men least expect him—is yet at the same time beyond all things, transcendent, making darkness his secret place, in his essence wholly beyond the understanding of man. The whole Church proclaims the coming of the kingdom of God, the nearness of his presence. The whole Church awaits with expectation the fullness of that kingdom which is not yet revealed. The Religious Life bears a special witness to this double reality. It speaks of something which has relevance, nearness to all men. It speaks of something absolute, which goes beyond the limits of man's heart and mind. It speaks as part of a larger and more complex reality, the Church, the

pilgrim people of God.

The proclamation of the kingdom is the beginning of the preaching of Jesus, and it issues at once in a call to faith, to repentance and commitment. To this call men respond in varying ways. There is a positive relationship, a reciprocity between these different callings. In the Commentary on the Statement of Principles, which makes up the greater part of the booklet and which, though it was written by one of its members, reflects the mind of the group as a whole, an attempt is made to show how the call to marriage and the call to single life can support and complement each other within the body of Christ:

At first sight the monk with his poverty, his obedience, his single state, seems to be saying No to creation, while the married couple are saying Yes. . . . But the monk is saying No to creation, not because he believes that it is bad, but because he believes that it can only be known as good when it is seen as the work of a good Creator. Marriage and monasticism, in their different ways, make a single affirmation, that man's life may be offered to God and hallowed by him, that it may be received and known as wholly God's gift. In making this affirmation in face of an unbelieving world both ways need the support which the other can give.

One of the paradoxical characteristics of this way of life, which is lived towards God rather than towards men, in the singleness of eternity rather than in the multiplicity of time, which has at its heart something solitary and unique, is that it can restore the true meaning of the created order, can itself build up a genuine community among men. 'It is not by chance that out of the dread of the naked encounter of man with God communities should have come which have cherished the virtues of discretion, compassion, gentleness, and humour and which have acted as models of ordered social life to society at large. For the God before whom we stand as our creator and judge is also our redeemer and brother, who establishes men to live in community.' Here we have a suggestion of the prophetic role which at times religious communities can play in relation to human society as a whole. We might think of the influence of the Rule of St. Benedict on European society in the early middle ages; of the influence of Dominican institutions on

the growth of representative institutions of other kinds; of the pioneer work of some nineteenth century sisterhoods in opening up the way for women into various types of medical and social work. In our own day we might think of the potential significance of multi-racial and international communities, as signs of the unity and brotherhood of man across the barriers of race and nationalism, signs of the community which is created once God is truly recognised and known as Father.

The essentially God-ward character of the life of the religious community is expressed specifically in its life of ordered prayer and worship and its practice of silence. Within the Anglican communities, as within Anglicanism as a whole, we find a special stress on silence. Furthermore, the present moves towards the reform and simplification of the office should not be understood as a weakening of conviction about the office itself. It is in and through constant common prayer in Eucharist and office alike that a community is built up into one in the Spirit. And this is true not only of liturgical prayer, but also of that context of personal prayer in which the corporate offering is set. In all there is a witness borne to the faith that men can grow in the love of God, and that the inward knowledge and experience of this is vital for all man's exterior activities. 'The communities stand for the basic principle of Christian prayer that in Christ and in the Spirit man can come to the Father and can grow in the knowledge and the love of God. In this growth he can be filled with a wisdom and an insight, a vision and a joy, which are not of this world, but which can shine out into this world with a healing and a reconciling power.'

Out of this conviction about the true end and purpose of man's life, comes the final point of the opening statement, that the existence of the religious community gives to individuals the possibility 'to devote themselves permanently to the loving service of God and man'. The question of the permanence of life-vows has again been raised in our times, but in a very different context from that of the nineteenth century controversy. Then the permanence of the marriage vow was unquestioned; it was the religious vow which was believed to be dangerous and illegitimate. Now it is the permanence of all vows which is being, if not decried, at least called in question. How can a human being commit himself for life, seeing that in the course of our life we may grow and change in so many ways? The Commentary here seeks to

base the permanence of the vow on the permanence of the call. God is faithful; any faithfulness of ours grows out of our response to his faithfulness. God is one; man made in his image must seek in his own life to grow into the likeness of that integration and unity. In marriage and celibacy alike, the vow does something both to symbolise and effect that unity. Naturally it is recognised that in a society like our own 'the element of informed, considered, free personal decision must be very large'. The vow is a free response of the whole person to an offer freely made by God.



Within the scope of this paper it is not possible to give a full account of the contents of this document published by the Advisory Council. In its later sections it deals with the various forms which the Religious Life may take, and of their need for adaptation in the face of present circumstances. Underlying these sections is the conviction which T.T. Carter expressed in the mid-nineteenth century when he wrote, 'True Catholicity is best seen in its power of adaptation to varying circumstances'. But at least, what has been written here may have made it clear that although this document, as an official Anglican statement on the character and purpose of the Religious Life may be without precedent, it is not without roots in Anglican tradition. Rather it reveals in terms of the new problems and opportunities of today, convictions about the meaning of the Religious Life in relation to the Church and the world which have been held with growing certainty by Anglicans over the past three centuries.

NOTES

1. There cannot be more than four thousand religious, men and women, in the whole Anglican Communion.
2. J. Bramhall, *A Just Vindication of the Church of England*. L.A.C.T. Vol. I. pp. 118-20, cited in A.M. Allchin, *The Silent Rebellion*. pp. 16-17.
3. *ibid.*
4. H. Thorndike, L.A.C.T. Vol. IV. Part II. *The Laws of the Church*. p. 815, cited in A.M. Allchin, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

5. H. Thorndike, L.A.C.T. Vol. V. pp. 571-2, cited *ibid*.
6. John Hacket, *Scrinia Roserata: a Memorial of John Williams D.D. 1693*. Part II. pp. 51-52 (spelling modernised). The standard works on Little Gidding and the Ferrar family are A. L. Maycock, *Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding* (1938) and *Chronicles of Little Gidding* (1954), though it must be noted that this writer minimises the monastic element in the life of the family: in his citation of the passage from Hacket, for instance, omitting the reference to St. Mungo.
7. Thomas Merton notes, 'I have an especial admiration for Father R. M. Benson, whose theology is perfectly traditional and sound, it seems to me. There is a special monastic quality in Anglican ideas of the religious life, and a genuine touch of protest, of "witness against" the torpor of the nineteenth century Anglican establishment.' T. Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, pp. 308-8.
8. R. M. Benson, *The Religious Vocation*, p. 56.
9. R. M. Benson, *The Followers of the Lamb*, p. 67.
10. G. Congreve, *Christian Progress*, p. 169.
11. From an article of T. T. Carter published in *The Church and the World, 1866*, edited by Orby Shipley, and cited in *The Silent Rebellion*, p. 76.
12. From a sermon preached in 1900, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 187.
13. On this subject see François Biot, O.P., *Communautés Protestantes* (1961). E. T. *The Rise of Protestant Monasticism* (1963), which has a valuable discussion of the positions of the Reformers and of contemporary developments.
14. Parallel organisations are to be found in the American Episcopal Church and in the Anglican Provinces of Australia and New Zealand.
15. This, and all subsequent quotations come from *Religious Communities in the World of Today*. (S.P.C.K., 1970).

"To Make a Beginning"

A sermon preached in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd at General Theological Seminary on January 30, 1988, for the Reception of the Promises of the Members, Companions and Associates of the Order of the Ascension

What we call the beginning is often the end

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from. --T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

Two days ago, as I was thinking about coming up from Washington to New York for this occasion, I realized that my beard was getting a bit shaggy so I telephoned the barber shop for a haircut and a trim. "Come right on over," the young barber said. He and his wife are new to Silver Spring, having set up shop last year, just a month or two before I arrived in town. This was our first meeting so we chatted a bit and I told him I was going to the City to preach at a very special occasion and wanted to look sharp. When he finished he said, "You have a good trip now." I felt moved to explain the occasion to him further, so I said, "Thank you. I'm going to preach at the service where some friends of mine make promises, take vows. You know. ..become monks." His eyes widened. "Well," I went on to say, "not exactly monks in the old-fashioned sense. They won't be living in a cloister but working in the world. Some of them are married!" His mouth fell open. The more I tried to explain, the more I confused the poor man. "My friends are forming a society of mission priests. They live in the world to do the Lord's work, but they live in the world under VOWS, like monks. You know?" He didn't, and by that time I wasn't sure I did either. He shook his head, wondering' no doubt what these white boys would get up to next. "You have a good trip now," he said.

It's not only confusing to participate in a celebration of the reception of the promises of the members, companions and associates of the Order of the Ascension, it's positively awesome. We are witnessing the foundation of a new Anglican religious order. It is an important event. But in order to value the reality of the moment, perhaps we need to let go of our sense of the historic occasion, and think about what it all means. It is not yet altogether clear, but then perhaps it need not be. The future is unknown, and thank God for that. I want to focus on three themes today, and I hope these three themes will be of use in the continuing discernment of the life of this community that is now coming into being. The themes are, first, the theme of vocation: the vocation of the Christian in baptism, the vocation of the Christian priesthood, and the Christian's vocation to heaven. Second, I want to speak of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ as the leading metaphor of the life of the Order of the Ascension. You have chosen this name, and the theme goes with you. Finally, I want to speak with you about friendship. Your Order grows out of the friendship of men and women who have worked together in ministry. A religious community is a community of friends. And all Christians have friendship with God as their ultimate vocation and end.

First, the vocation. We live in a time when people do not have a clear understanding of what a religious community is, as my conversation with the barber reminds us. Indeed, we lack a clear sense of what Christian community itself might be for us. Yet paradoxically, ours is a time in which people are desperate for community. We live in a Church in which people go to seminary in order to learn to be Christians. Think about that. When people want to think seriously about God, to study the Scriptures, to participate in a community of Eucharist and

fellowship, to pray, to serve the poor and the cause of justice and peace we pack them off to seminary to become priests. Yet this is precisely the baptismal vocation of all Christians. It is parishes, not seminaries, that should be the training ground of Christians!

The vocation of the Order of the Ascension, insofar as it has now been discerned, and open as it is to the calling of God as you enter the unknown future, is a priestly vocation, that is, a vocation of and to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Your task will be, I suspect, so to proclaim the Word and offer to others in the parishes and communities you serve as priests the grace of God that they may be drawn not to you but to Christ, not to self but to sacrifice, not to a particular form of Church structure, such as a religious order, but to friendship with God. You are at a beginning now, but that beginning is (like all beginnings) also an end. The end of your long and rigorous period of preparation, of discernment, of planning and praying about founding an Order, is the beginning of the life of the Order in the Church and the world. As you move ever more deeply into your own friendship with God, which arises in the context of your friendship for one another, you will be drawn into ways and missions that you little dream of now. And perhaps into structures that you can scarcely imagine. Do not be afraid to follow the vocation wherever it leads, to follow Christ to Calvary and to the mount of the Ascension, into the life of God. Today you dare to accept the friendship to which Christ calls you, to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity. Don't be afraid. You will receive power to do the work Christ calls you to, the work of the Kingdom of God.

Which brings me to the second theme, the image of the Ascension as the metaphor of your community, the image of your relationship with God. If the whole idea of a religious community is bizarre in twentieth century America, the Ascension is even more bizarre for most of us. We worry too much about the physical details, not because we are so committed to an incarnational focus on the world and the flesh into which Christ comes, but because we can't get our noses off the ground. We fear to lift our eyes to heaven! And so we miss the Gospel in its full meaning. Let us be clear that the God who created the universe and brought human life to flower on this planet can raise men and women from the dead and take them into intimate relationship with the Divine Being in whatever way God chooses. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!" But the New Testament writers are not terribly interested in the physical details of the Ascension. In Acts the disciples see Jesus "lifted Up" and taken out of their sight by a cloud. They remember the cloud as the one which appeared on Sinai and the Mount of Transfiguration. They recognize the cloud as a sign of God's gracious presence. They know that God is taking Jesus back into heaven "that he might fill all things," in order to be able to send the Spirit, the promise of the Father, upon the Church to enable ~ to preach the Kingdom Jesus has inaugurated and entrusted to our hands. ; Jesus cautioned them to "stay in the city, *to wait upon God* in prayer before entering upon their mission, and in everything they did to be *dependent upon God* for their power and their being, for action and essence. It is in the city we shall find God, in the reality of our everyday life. We will not find God except among the poor and the oppressed, where Christ calls us to be, to wait for his coming again with those who know their need of God.

Christ reigns in heaven that we may serve on earth. Christ has ascended because God came down to share our human life. We are called into the city, among the poor, in order that all may be lifted up to God. It remains to ask why the metaphor of above and below, height and depth, coming down and ascending, is used to express this central truth of the Christian revelation. And the reason is, I think, because it is a category of our human nature. Not only

our language, our cultural forms, but the human mind itself finds expression in this metaphor. It is not that God comes down to us and takes us up into the Trinity because human thought is expressed in these terms, but precisely the reverse. We think this way because God is that way. It is our experience because God has put it into our being, reflecting divine Being. We have all, I imagine, experienced dreams of flying. We are on a high place, perhaps a mountain top or the roof of a tall building. We are afraid. Perhaps our flight begins involuntarily. We fall, we are fearful, and then, miraculously, we do not hit the ground but soar up into the sky. There is a feeling of great power in this dream, of tremendous confidence. We learn to trust ourselves. Our flight is effortless, our action perfect. The myth of Icarus' flight testifies to the universality of the human longing to be freed from limitation, to be free. In our deepest self we yearn for the experience of the birds, or the angels. And in our dreams we know the freedom of God.

The Ascension points to this, and points us to God. Something deep within us dreams of the divine humanity, of perfect freedom. Christ came among us that we might become what we dream. He came among us and was raised by the Father from the dead, and now reigns on high, above all that we can imagine. And because he has taken our humanity with him to heaven, we too shall reign in glory. We shall be friends of God. The name of the Order of the Ascension calls you into the Godhead to share the life of God. Not for yourselves alone, but for the world for which Christ died.

Finally, all human life finds its purpose and meaning, its true end, in friendship with God. The Order of the Ascension must be a vehicle for its members' becoming friends of God, and then be a way of sharing God's friendship with the Church and the world. The times are not happy ones for this aspect of your life, any more than they are right for monks or ascensions or for redemption. We modern Americans want to relativize everything, and to stand only upon our own experience. But in so doing we lose the ground we have to stand upon to understand and express our experience. We don't know anymore what we are *for*. And lacking purpose, we find our meaning tenuous, ambivalent, doubtful, and ultimately we despair. We must find our way home. We have a home. God really does call us. Our salvation is in friendship with God, because our being is there, with God. ,

Thomas Aquinas wrote that "the end of human life is felicity." happiness. The angelic doctor, as much at home in hymns to the Eucharistic Lord as in philosophical theology, as often an advisor to world leaders as a poor preacher of good news to sinners, is a good model for the Order of the Ascension. His commitment to truth led him simply to be about the Father's business and to leave us a marvel of insight that to him was of no consequence, since it had served his purpose in helping him become a friend to God. and at his end he had no further need of it. But 'in his rigorous quest for truth, he asked fearlessly what it is that would make the human being happy. He trusted there was an answer to his question and he found it, not in abstraction but in his own experience, with life, and with the Truth Himself.

There are different sorts of happiness. The happiness of politics, of accomplishing the work. The happiness of contemplation, of gazing upon the Beloved. The happiness of friendship, a mutual thing. The happiness of being friends with God. The happiness for which we humans are destined is for us supernatural, but it is natural to God. In order for us to experience this happiness, we must be able to participate in the life of God, we must become the companions

of God. We must learn to live with God in order to be able to live --with God. The means and the end are the same.

The theologian writes:

Now, that which enables one to live together with another person is chiefly friendship. ...Thus, some people go hunting together, others drink together, still others, devote themselves to philosophy, and so on.

It was consequently necessary that Some form of friendship with God be made available, so that we might live together with Him; and this is love. Now, this sharing in divine life exceeds the capacity of nature, as does the happiness to which it is directed. So, nature must be perfected for this purpose by a superadded good; and this is the essential character of this virtue. Hence, we must say that love is a theological virtue that is: *poured into our hearts b the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

St. Thomas' is not a name that is on everyone's lips in Anglican circles these days. But he was a friend of God, and we do well to be among the circle of God's friends. That is, I think, your task, as it is the task of all the baptized. And with that, the call of the baptized, I come back at the end to the beginning of this charge.

To sum up: We are created to be God's friends. God made us for that. Christ lived and died as one of us, and went into heaven to take our humanity into the very life of God, that we might become God's friends. Christian community in general, and your form of it in particular, is made *for* friendship, and *by* friendship. We are, to foster friendship with God by being friends ourselves.

This, then, is my charge to you on this special day:

Be a sign of contradiction to the world, and to the Church. In the humility that comes from community, contradict our smugness. In the self- knowledge that comes from friendship with God, contradict our arrogance. As ordained persons, set apart for the service of the altar, show us that the servant is our only guide. Kneel with Jesus.

Be a sign of hope to the world, and to the Church. In the face of the despair that you too will feel, rely on the one who has blessed you even as he was parted from you, and given you the gift of waiting, and the power that comes to the poor. As servants of the ascended Lord, dare to proclaim the good news we fear to hear yet so desperately need. Fly with Jesus.

Be a sign of love to the world, and to the Church. Be friends yourselves. You began as friends, continue in friendship. Let that beginning be your end and purpose, to be friends still with one another, and with God. Pray for the gift of martyrdom for your community. Prepare for the success that will try your faith and be a snare to your love. Fear only to be faithless. Trust the spirit within you, and the Spirit who calls you out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Be among the poor, the lonely, the outcast, the hopeless, the oppressed. There you will find Jesus, who is your friend. Stand with Jesus, and walk with him to heaven in the company of all God's friends.

--Emmett Jarrett

**Letter of His Holiness
JOHN PAUL II
to
the Bishops
of the United States
April 3, 1983**

and

**Essential Elements
in the Church's Teaching
on Religious Life
as Applied to Institutes
Dedicated to Works
of the Apostolate**

**Sacred Congregation
for Religious and
for Secular Institutes**

May 31, 1983

ST. PAUL EDITIONS

variety in the context of the American reality. Nevertheless, there are elements which are common to all forms of religious life and which the Church regards as essential. These include: a vocation given by God, an ecclesial consecration to Jesus Christ through the profession of the evangelical counsels by public vows, a stable form of community life approved by the Church, fidelity to a specific founding gift and sound traditions, a sharing in Christ's mission by a corporate apostolate, personal and liturgical prayer—especially Eucharistic worship, public witness, a lifelong formation, a form of government calling for religious authority based on faith, a specific relation to the Church. Fidelity to these basic elements, laid down in the constitutions approved by the Church, guarantees the strength of religious life and grounds our hope for its future growth.

8. Formation

44. Religious formation fosters growth in the life of consecration to the Lord from the earliest stages, when a person first becomes seriously interested in undertaking it, to its final consummation, when the religious meets the Lord definitively in death. The religious lives a particular form of life, and life itself is in constant ongoing development. It does not stand still. Nor is the religious simply called and consecrated once. The call of God and the consecration by Him continue throughout life, capable of growing and deepening in ways beyond our understanding. The discernment of the capacity to live a life that will foster this growth according to the spiritual patrimony and provisions of a given institute, and the accompanying of the life itself in its personal evolution in each member in community, are the two main facets of formation.

45. For each religious, formation is the process of becoming more and more a disciple of Christ, growing in union with and in configuration to Him. It is a matter of taking on increasingly the mind of Christ, of sharing more deeply His gift of Himself to the Father and His brotherly service of the human family, and of doing this according to the founding gift which mediates the Gospel to the members of a given religious institute. Such a process requires a genuine conversion. The "putting on of Jesus Christ" (cf. Rom. 13:14, Gal. 3:27, Eph. 4:24) implies the stripping off of selfishness and egoism (cf. Eph. 4:22-24, Col. 3:9-10). The very fact of "walking henceforth according to the Spirit" means giving up "the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). The religious professes to make this putting on of Christ, in his poverty, his love and his obedience, the essential pursuit of life. It is a pursuit which never ends. There is a constant maturing in it, and this reaches not only to spiritual values but also to those which contribute psychologically, culturally and socially to the fullness of the human personality. As the religious grows toward the fullness of Christ according to his or her state of life, there is a verification of the statement in *Lumen Gentium*: "While the profession of the evangelical counsels involves the renunciation of goods that undoubtedly deserve to be highly valued, it does not constitute an obstacle to the true development of the human person but by its nature is extremely beneficial to that development" (LG 46).

46. The ongoing configuration to Christ comes about according to the charism and provisions of the institute to which the religious belongs. Each has its own spirit, character, purpose and tradition, and it is in accordance with these that the religious grow in their union with Christ. For religious institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate, formation includes the preparation and contin-

ual up-dating of the members to undertake the works proper to their institute, not simply as professionals, but as "living witnesses to love without limit and to the Lord Jesus" (ET 53). Accepted as a matter of personal responsibility by each religious, formation becomes not only an individual personal growth but also a blessing to the community and a source of fruitful energy for the apostolate.

47. Since the initiative for religious consecration is in the call of God, it follows that God Himself, working through the Holy Spirit of Jesus, is the first and principal agent in the formation of the religious. He acts through His word and sacraments, through the prayer of the liturgy, the magisterium of the Church, and more immediately through those who are called in obedience to help the formation of their brothers and sisters in a more special way. Responding to God's grace and guidance, the religious accepts in love the responsibility for personal formation and growth, welcoming the consequences of this response which are unique to each person and always unpredictable. The response, however, is not made in isolation. Following the tradition of the early fathers of the desert and of all the great religious founders in the matter of provision for spiritual guidance, religious institutes each have members who are particularly qualified and appointed to help their sisters and brothers in this matter. Their role varies according to the stage reached by the religious but their main responsibilities are: discernment of God's action; the accompaniment of the religious in the ways of God; the nourishing of life with solid doctrine and the practice of prayer; and, particularly in the first stages, the evaluation of the journey thus far made. The director of novices and the religious responsible for those in first profession have also the task of verifying whether the

young religious have the call and capacity for first and for final profession. The whole process, at whatever stage, takes place in community. A prayerful and dedicated community, building its union in Christ and sharing His mission together, is a natural milieu for formation. It will be faithful to the traditions and constitutions of the institute, and be well-inserted in the institute as a whole, in the Church and in the society it serves. It will support its members and keep before them in faith during the whole of their lives the goal and values which their consecration implies.

48. Formation is not achieved all at once. The journey from the first to the final response falls broadly into five phases: the pre-novitiate, in which the genuineness of the call is identified as far as possible; the novitiate which is initiation into a new form of life; first profession and the period of maturing prior to perpetual profession; perpetual profession and the ongoing formation of the mature years; and finally the time of diminishment, in whatever way this comes, which is a preparation for the definitive meeting with the Lord. Each of these phases has its own goal, content and particular provisions. The stages of novitiate and profession especially, because of their importance, are carefully determined in their main lines by the Church in her common law. All the same, much is left to the responsibility of individual institutes. These are asked to give details concretely in their constitutions for a considerable number of the provisions to which common law refers in principle.

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The Church's Influence in Society

This book focuses on the dynamics and vocation of the parish church. Within that arena the primary way in which the church influences society is through the lives of the baptized as they play their roles in families, with friends, in the workplace and in civic life. To a lesser extent a parish may also have an impact as an institution by how it invests its funds, uses its purchasing power, and educates its members, and engages in corporate ministries of service.

The wider church, in convention, frequently takes positions on issues facing the region and nation and may form vehicles to act in support of those positions. What are some of the principles upon which the church might base those statements as it attempts to influence government and other institutions? Here's a sampling from a few Anglican thinkers.

In *Christianity and Social Order*, in 1942 William Temple wrote that what he was offering were not "an expression of a purely personal point of view but represent the main trend of Christian social teaching." He suggested considerations such as these:

- The world...results from His love; creation is a kind of overflow of the divine love."
- "The aim of a Christian social order is the fullest possible development of individual personality in the widest and deepest possible fellowship."
- In a chapter on "How Should the Church Interfere?" he began with an affirmation of the lay apostolate. "Nine-tenths of the work of the Church in the world is done by Christian people fulfilling responsibilities and performing tasks which in themselves are not part of the official system of the Church at all." In a later work, Temple wrote of the organic reality of the Body, "the stream of redemptive power flows out from the church through the lives of its members into the society which they influence." (*What Christians Stand for in the Secular World*)
- "It is of crucial importance that the Church acting corporately should not commit itself to any particular policy. A policy always depends on technical decisions concerning the actual relations of cause and effect in the political and economic world; about these the Christian has no more reliable judgment than an atheist..."
- His answer to how the church should interfere had three parts: 1) through its members fulfilling "their moral responsibilities and functions in a Christian spirit;" 2) its members exercising their civic rights in a Christian spirit; and 3) offering its members "a systematic statement of principles" to guide the first two.
- Cautious about utopian approaches. "...no one really wants to live in the ideal state as depicted by anyone else."
- "The art of government in fact is the art of so ordering life that self-interest prompts what justice demands."
- Every child should "find itself a member of a family housed with decency and dignity" without having to face lack of food or conditions that are overcrowded, dirty or drab, and "have the opportunity of an education...as to allow for his peculiar aptitudes and make possible their full development." Every citizen should have an income to "enable him to maintain a home and bring up children," "have a voice in the conduct of the business or industry which is carried on by means of his labor," "have sufficient daily leisure with two days rest in seven," "have assured liberty in the forms of freedom of worship, of speech, of assembly." "The resources of the earth should be used as God's gifts to the whole human race, and used with due consideration for the needs of the present and future generations."

In *The Christian Moral Vision* (1979), Earl Brill offered these comments on influencing public policy

- "It is difficult to talk about 'Christian' public policy because there is no one Christian way to run a country. There is no political program which all the faithful ought to support."
- "There are, however, some Christian presumptions concerning public policy. They would include a concern for social justice; a bias in favor of the poor, the oppressed, the outsider; a commitment to the solidarity of the whole human family; an investment in the freedom of individuals to develop their own gifts and interests; and a commitment to equal treatment under the law."
- On work – "... all God's children should have a chance to work ... society itself has an obligation to provide work for everyone.". Work can be seen as vocation with its opportunities to serve others and "can enable us to express that creative urge within ourselves that is the image of God." Leisure – "... leisure is also good. It also affords an opportunity to express our creativity. In leisure we also imitate God, who, after he had created the world, rested on the seventh day." Labor unions – "represent legitimate expressions of the corporate concerns of American workers. ... They have conferred a measure of dignity upon the worker who can assert, through the union, the right to bargain on equal terms with the employer."

In the *Christian Social Witness* (2001) by Harold Lewis

- "Does not God want us to show the same love and compassion for others that he has shown to us? ... The concept that we call 'human rights' is basically grounded in our belief that God places value on each person. The recognition of one another's human rights is the cornerstone of justice, which in turn is grounded in love. We are, therefore, called upon to as Christians to uphold and execute justice as an expression of the love that God holds for all of us."
- He raises a concern about a dynamic within the Episcopal Church that seems to undermine our social witness. "A glance at General Convention resolutions over the past two or three decades reveals that the church has flitted from one concern to another."
- A commitment to social justice has always been a hallmark of Anglicanism. ..." (p. 33).